35 EUROPEAN LEAGUES ANALYSED

World Soccer

GLOBAL FOOTBALL SINCE 1960

June 2018

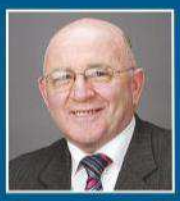
SEASON REVIEW

2017-18 SPECIAL

Winners, losers, stars & newcomers. The complete record

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

EUROPA LEAGUE FINAL



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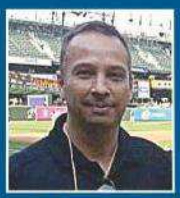
ESPN Soccer Analyst

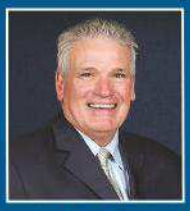
Matt Martin
Real Salt Lake Academy Scouting Director

Lee Fraser
Newcastle United Technical Scout



John Print
FIFA Agent

Sky Andrew
FIFA Agent



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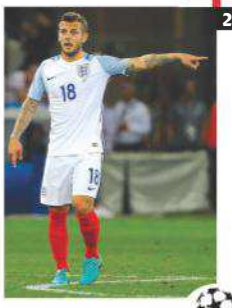
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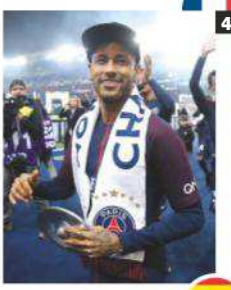
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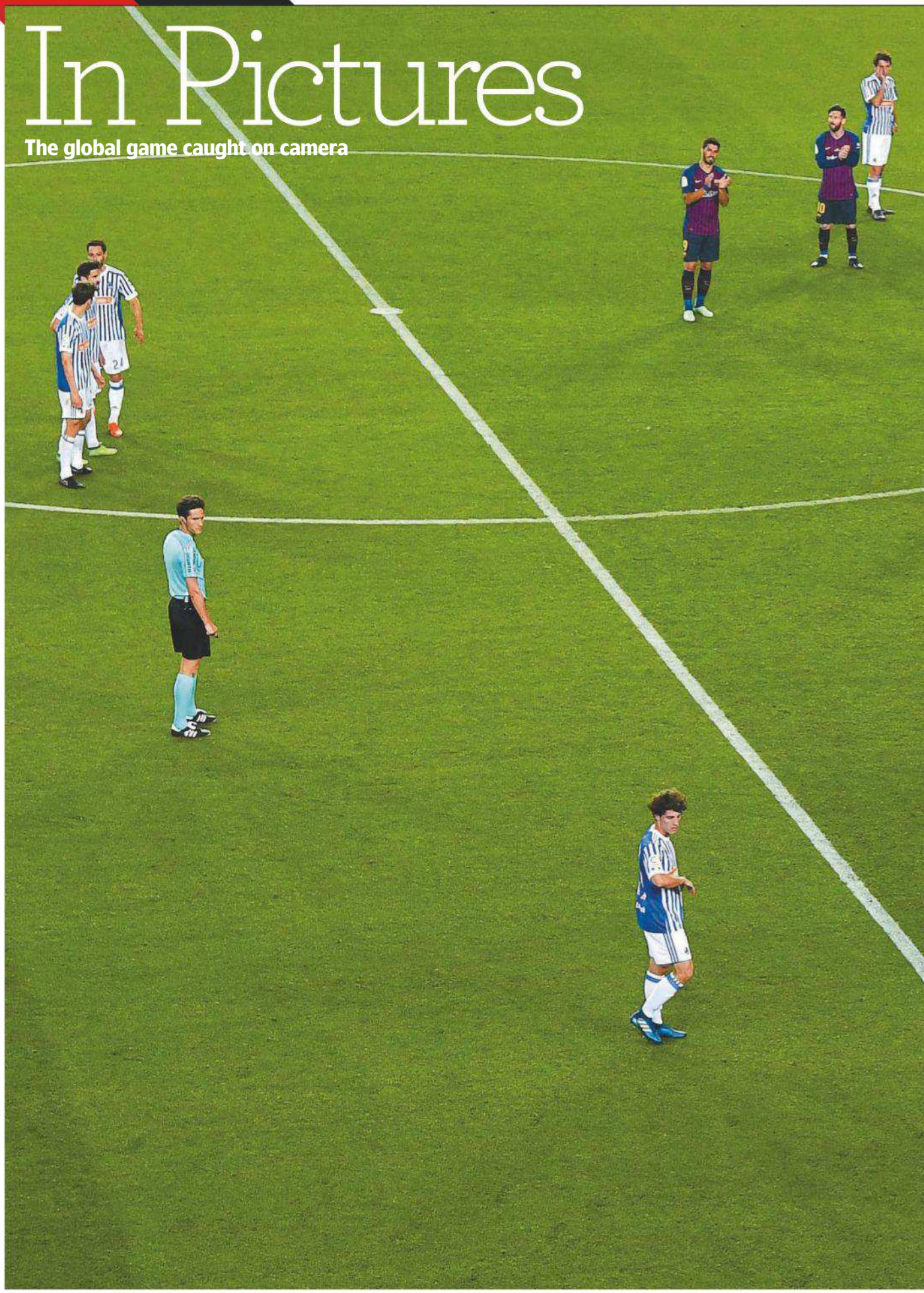
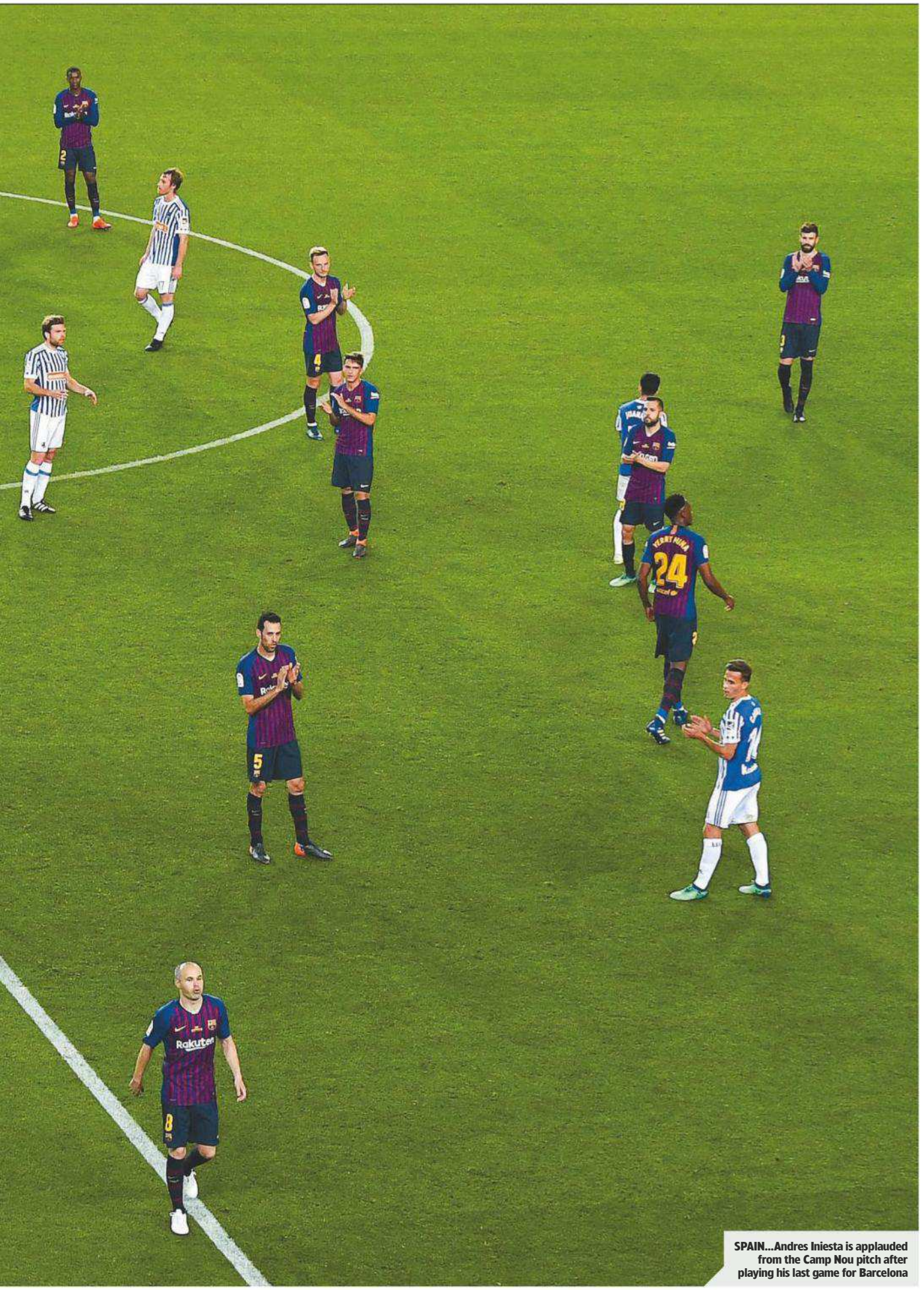
The global game caught on camera





SPAIN...Andres Iniesta is applauded from the Camp Nou pitch after playing his last game for Barcelona

COLOMBIA...Independiente Medellin's Juan Fernando Caicedo leaps over a Sol de America player during a rain-affected Sudamericana Cup clash

SWEDEN...Hammarby fans at their game against AIK

BRAZIL...Ze Rafael of Bahia celebrates a goal

GERMANY...a police dog is on the pitch as trouble breaks out during the Bundesliga match between Hamburg and Borussia Monchengladbach

MEXICO...Santos Laguna win the Clausura title

HOLLAND...players and staff of De Graafschap find a novel way to celebrate promotion to the Eredivisie after their game against Almere City

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FROM THE EDITOR

As this issue of *World Soccer* went to press, the Spanish federation took the bold decision, on the eve of the World Cup, to sack coach Julen Lopetegui following the announcement of his appointment as the next coach of Real Madrid.

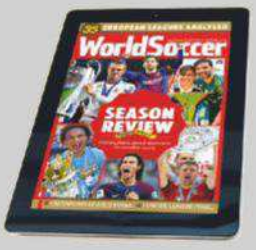
As we look back on an eventful European club season, the story of the month should have been the decision by Zinedine Zidane to quit after leading Madrid to a remarkable third successive European Cup, their 13th in all.

Instead, the European champions – and their president Florentino Perez in particular – find themselves under fire for the "arrogance" of giving the Spanish federation just five minutes notice before announcing Lopetegui's appointment to the world – and then presenting their new man at a press conference shortly after the World Cup's opening game.

> The Lopetegui affair says a lot about the fragile balance between club football and the international game

The affair says a lot about the fragile balance between club football and the international game. By the time you read this, the World Cup will have kicked off in Russia. In our next issue we'll review every single game from what we all hope will be a memorable tournament.

See you then.



Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1 Lopetegui sacked by Spain on eve of the World Cup p22
2 United bid wins 2026 hosting rights p12
3 Ghana FA suspended amid corruption scandal p10
4 Zidane quits after leading Real Madrid to 13th European crown p36
5 Atletico Madrid beat Marseille in Europa League Final p38
6 Juventus win seventh successive Serie A crown p46
7 Manchester City stroll to Premier League title p40
8 Barcelona do the double in Spain p48
9 PSG win the treble in France p42
10 Bayern on top in Germany again p44

GHANA

FA dissolved amid corruption scandal

The Ghanian government dissolved the country's Football Association after the FA president Kwesi Nyantakyi and other officials were caught up in one of African football's biggest corruption scandals.

Nyantakyi resigned as FA president and was banned by FIFA for 90 days from all football activity after he was filmed apparently accepting a "cash gift" of $65,000 (£48,000) from an undercover reporter pretending to be a businessman.

Nyantakyi is the second most powerful official in African football, as the first vice-president of CAF, and is also a member of the FIFA Council. He did not attend the FIFA Congress in Moscow, where Ghana were excluded from voting on the 2026 World Cup bids.

Nyantakyi and other officials from around the continent were secretly filmed by undercover reporters receiving cash gifts as part of a documentary by controversial Ghanaian investigative journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas, who retains anonymity through a series of disguises.

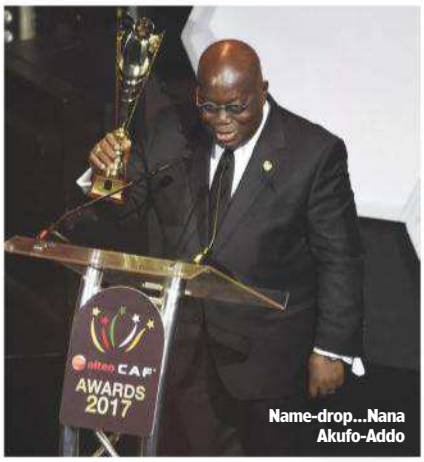
Nyantakyi told the reporters that he could help bribe Ghana's state president Nana Akufo-Addo, as well as the vice president and government ministers to secure contracts in exchange for millions.

Others implicated in the continent-wide

"Here is something for you, for shopping"

A reporter offers Ghana FA boss Kwesi Nyantakyi a cash gift in an undercover sting operation

Disguise ...Anas Arameyaw Anas



Name-drop...Nana Akufo-Addo

investigation included Aden Range Marwa, an assistant linesman from Kenya who was due to officiate at the World Cup in Russia. He resigned after he was filmed receiving a cash gift of $600.

The Ghana FA was replaced by a five-man interim committee headed by businessman Kofi Amoah, the chairman of Ghana's Local Organizing Committee at the 2008 Nations Cup of Nations. It also included three-times African Footballer of the Year, Abedi Pele.

HEROES & VILLAINS

Mum...Jan Vertonghen

JAN VERTONGHEN

The Tottenham Hotspur defender became the first Belgian to win 100 caps when he played in the pre-World Cup friendly against Portugal. He was presented with a special award by his mother ahead of the match.

EMMANUEL BOATENG

Became the first player to score a hat-trick against Barcelona since Diego Forlan 13 years ago, in Levante's 5-4 win against the Spanish champions.

LUIS RUBIALES

The Spanish federation president earned praise for standing up to Real Madrid and Florentino Perez over the European champions' hiring of national coach Julen Lopetegui.

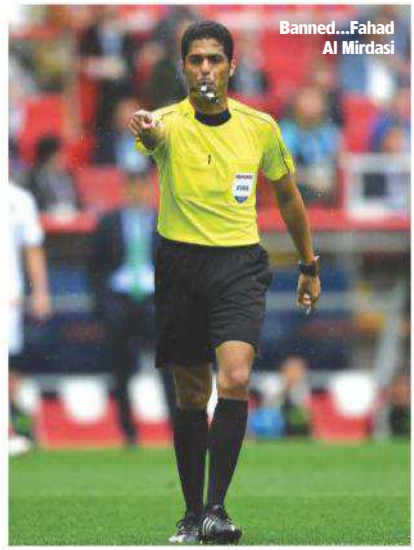
SUNIL CHHETRI

The veteran forward scored twice on his 100th appearance for India in a 3-0 defeat of Kenya.

Double...Sunil Chhetri

NIKLAS SULE

The Bayern Munich player became only the second player to score three own goals in a Bundesliga season, 40 years after Hamburg's Manny Kaltz became the first.



Banned...Fahad Al Mirdasi

FAHAD AL MIRDASI

Due to officiate at the World Cup, the Saudi Arabian referee was excluded from the finals after being banned for life in his homeland for a match-fixing attempt.

ANTONIO CARLOS NUNES

The president of the Brazilian federation, having stated his public support for the United 2026 World Cup bid, voted for Morocco in the belief that the poll was private.

LUKA MODRIC

Croatia's captain was charged with perjury after being suspected of making false statements during the trial of ex-Dinamo Zagreb chief executive Zdravko Mamic, who was found guilty of stealing millions of euros in transfer fees.

Perjury...Luka Modric

"I would like to reaffirm the determination of my country to continue to work for football and realise one day our dream to host the World Cup in Morocco"

Morocco Football Federation president Fouzi Lekjaa

FIFA CONGRESS

United for 2026

Joint USA-Canada-Mexico bid triumphs in Moscow

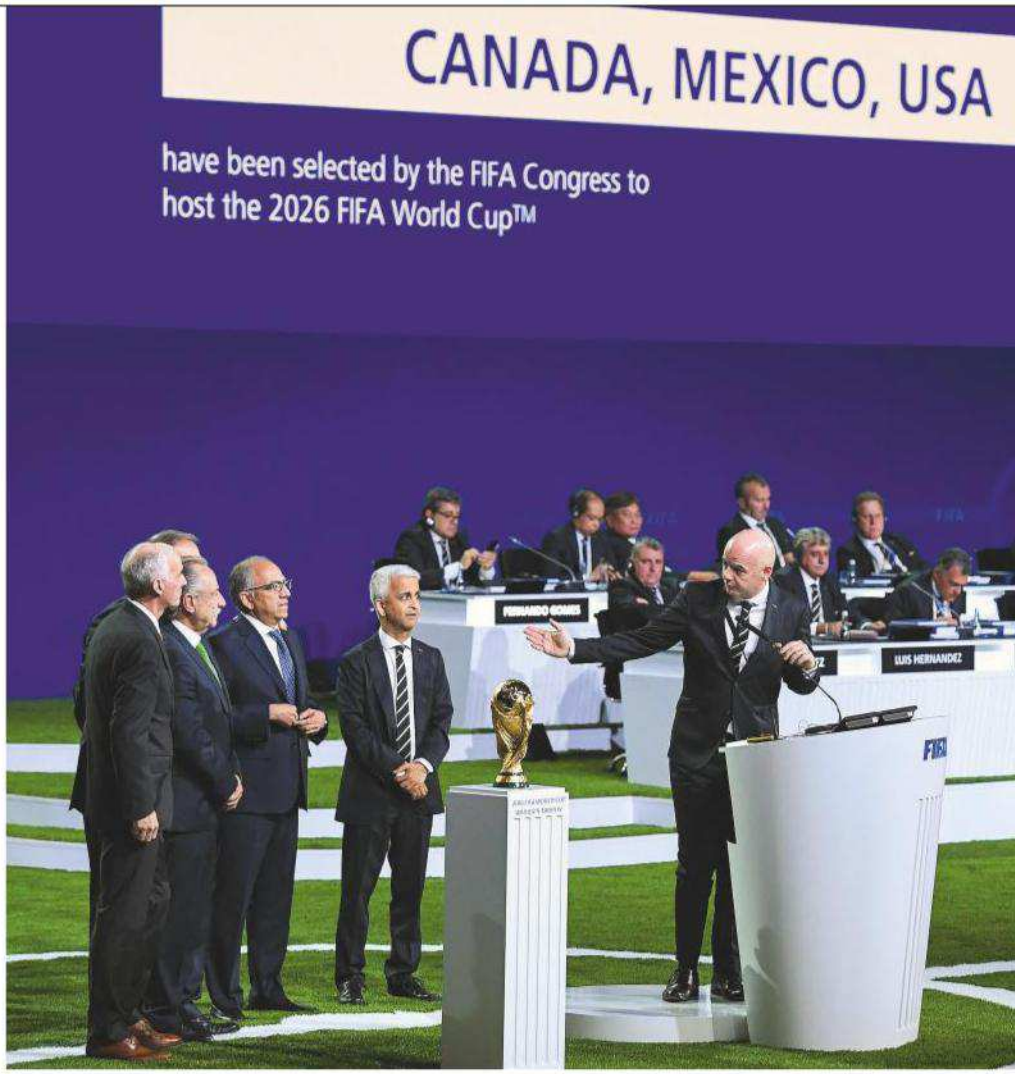
Three years ago it looked bleak for FIFA. The vengeance of the United States had been visited on the House of Blatter and an entire corrupted edifice was collapsing around the ears of its acquiescent president. Now, with events at the Baur au Lac on May 27, 2015, still fresh in the mind, the Zurich vista has spun on its axis. FIFA Congress in Moscow, of the eve of the 2018 World Cup, was that surreal.

Gianni Infantino is leading FIFA with a Blatteresque self-regard which fired his declaration of a candidature for re-election this time next year. His grandiose financial projections have been shored up by the award of the 2026 World Cup to the USA and junior partners Canada and Mexico.

United 2026 trounced its lone rival, Morocco, by 134 votes to 65. The final tally saw abstentions from Slovenia, Spain and Cuba, the diplomatic ballot withdrawal of three US territories plus Iran having voted for "none of the above". The four federations involved in the bids were barred from voting.

Mexico therefore secured a hosting role for the third time, after sole stagings in 1970 and 1986. The USA welcomed the world game in 1994, while Canada staged a successful Women's World Cup in 20215. Infantino would not guarantee all three direct seeding to "their" finals but left the issue for regional confederation CONCACAF to resolve.

Leaders of the two bids had raced around the pre-congress conferences of the confederations in Moscow in pursuit of votes. No hint ever emerged of a late groundswell of support for Morocco. This sense of impending doom probably persuaded more than a few undecided voters to back the winning ticket.



United...the winner is announced

Infantino was always believed to have favoured the United proposal because of its all-round financial superiority, from ticketing revenue to hospitality income to sponsorship allure.

Each bid had a 15-minute slot to state its case. United kicked off with appeals for support from federation chiefs Decio De Maria (Mexico), Steven Reid (Canada) and Carlos Cordeiro (USA).

De Maria said a United hosting would be "like a great family reunion, all of us sharing our favourite sport". Cordeiro concluded by saying: "Our three nations understand the power of football to bring people together just as it has brought us together."

> "Our three nations understand the power of football to bring people together just as it has brought us together"
>
> **Carlos Cordeiro, president of the United States Soccer Federation**

While United promoted its existing infrastructure and projection of a record $11 billion profit, Morocco stood tall for the world game's less affluent. Appeals from bid chair Moulay Hafid Elalamy and federation president Fouzi Lekjaa went in vain, while the most impressive individual in the bid team, Hicham El Amrani, was relegated to a spectator's role.

FIFA rebuilt the bidding process after the scandal surrounding the awards to Russia for 2018 and Qatar for 2022. Now, for the first time since 1966, the full congress voted on bids analysed by the task force and approved by the 36-strong FIFA Council. For the first time, individual voting was open to public scrutiny – which sparked a surprise at seeing Russia voting for United 2026.

No wonder Infantino appropriated one of Blatter's best old congress lines to declare himself a "happy president".

Infantino told delegates from 210 member associations – only crisis-hit

"I didn't feel ambushed at all, it's polite. He's the president of the country"

David Gill, the English FIFA vice-president, on shaking hands with Russia's Vladimir Putin at the Congress in Moscow

Ghana was absent – that when he took up the presidency "FIFA was clinically dead as an organisation".

All that had changed, he claimed, on his personal watch.

Infantino said: "Today, a bit over two years later, FIFA is alive and well, full of joy, filled with passion and with a vision for its future. The reforms and the principles of good governance that we introduced were instrumental in this renaissance of FIFA.

"We introduced term limits, three terms of four years, we named independent members to our finance and development committees, we voted in high ranking and very respected personalities to our bodies."

Infantino switched confidently between the main four FIFA languages – French, German, English and Spanish – as he talked up the body's "absolute transparency about financial aspects".

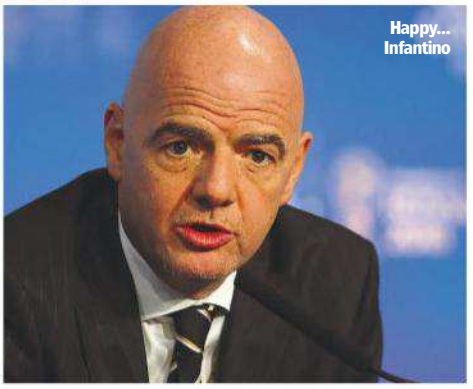
He added: "Everybody knows exactly now where the money comes from and where it is destined. There are no longer additional costs in the balance sheet. Everything is clearly documented and clearly traceable.

"We published the Garcia report [into the 2018/2022 World Cup award scandal] that had been hidden away for four or five years and we also introduce an application system that is solid, transparent and reliable for the World Cup hosting in 2026."

But above all, and doubtless with an eye on his re-election next year, Infantino enjoyed talking up the financial status of an organisation in financial free fall after the corruption scandals.

Infantino said: "I can present to you incredible figures when it comes to the finances of FIFA. Some were predicting God knows what dark days for the future of FIFA finances especially if we were to invest more in development.

"But at the end of this 2015-18 cycle the original projection and budget which was $5bn will, at the end, foresee over $6.1bn – more than $1.1bn more than what was expected four years ago and in spite of the worst crisis FIFA has experienced. I'm also proud that, instead of $350million we now have $1.4bn invested in football development. It is your money and you and your children and your boys and girls are the ones who have to benefit from the revenues of FIFA."



Happy... Infantino

FIFA remains scarred by the crooked cabal who benefited from the international game's revenues in the past. Time rather than talk will determine whether Infantino has accomplished a long-term turnaround.

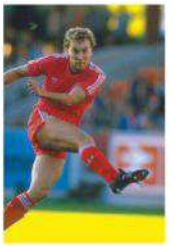
Keir Radnedge

OBITUARIES

Roy BENTLEY (1924-2018)
A centre-forward who captained Chelsea to their first trophy, winning the league in 1955, he remains fifth in the club's list of all-time goalscorers. Capped 12 times by England, he was the last surviving member of the side that lost 1-0 to the USA at the 1950 World Cup.

Skipper...Bentley

Neale COOPER (1963-2018)
A member of Aberdeen's 1983 European Cup-winners Cup side, the Indian-born midfielder later played for Aston Villa and Rangers, among others, before managing Ross County, Hartlepool United (twice), Gillingham and Peterhead.



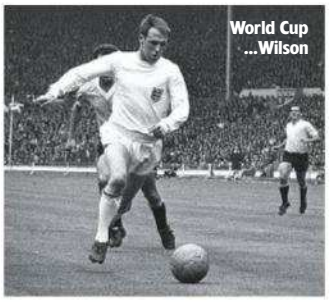
Euro winner...Cooper

Henri MICHEL (1947-2018)
The midfielder was capped 58 times by France and coached *Les Bleus* from 1984 to 1988, winning gold at the 1984 Olympics and reaching the World Cup semi-finals in 1986. He also led Cameroon, Morocco, Tunisia and Ivory Coast at the World Cup, and had spells in charge of the UAE, Equatorial Guinea and Kenya.

Olympic gold...Michel

Fadil VOKRII (1960-2018)
Former Partizan Belgrade, Nimes and Fenerbahce forward, capped by Yugoslavia, he was president of the Football Federation of Kosovo when it became FIFA's 210th member association in 2016.

Ray WILSON (1934-2018)
At 32, the left-back was the oldest player in the England starting XI that beat West Germany 4-2 in the 1966 World Cup Final at Wembley. An FA Cup winner that same year with Everton, he also played for Huddersfield Town, Oldham Athletic and Bradford City.



World Cup ...Wilson

"She's phenomenal. I always say to people that I think Lucy could play in the men's game"

England women's manager Phil Neville on his right-back, Lucy Bronze

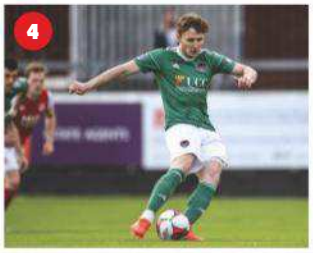
GOALS we'd like to see again

1 RILEY McGREE
Newcastle Jets v Melbourne City
Scores with a "scorpion kick" in the A-League play-off semi-finals.

2 SAMUEL ARMENTEROS
Portland Timbers v Colorado Rapids
Receives a pass and dummies his marker before curling a left-footed shot into the far corner.

3 GARETH BALE
Real Madrid v Liverpool
Overhead kick beats goalkeeper Loris Karius in the Champions League Final.

4 KIERAN SADLIER
Cork City v St Patrick's Athletic
When the St Pat's keeper comes up for a corner, Cork clear and, from inside his own area, Sadlier's looping shot trickles over the line.



5 ILSINHO
Philadelphia Union v Chicago Fire.
Shows great footwork to beat two defenders before firing a shot high into the far corner.

6 NEYMAR
Brazil v Croatia
Demonstrates good close control to beat two opposing defenders before smashing a shot high into the net in a pre-World Cup friendly.

WINNERS

ZINEDINE ZIDANE
Became the first coach to win three consecutive European champions cups – then quit Madrid.

KENNY DALGLISH
The former Liverpool and Scotland star was knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

NIKO KOVAC
Led Eintracht Frankfurt to a shock German Cup win over his future employers, Bayern Munich.

LOSERS

NWANKWO KANU
The ex-Nigeria striker had $11,000 stolen from his luggage in Moscow ahead of the World Cup.

HAMBURG
Relegated from the Bundesliga for the first time in their history after 55 seasons in the German top flight.

JURGEN KLOPP
The Liverpool boss suffered a sixth cup Final defeat in a row by losing in the Champions League.

Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

Learning to love the play-offs

Crowning a champion used to be so satisfactory. Take 18 or 20 teams, they all play each other home and away, and whoever gets the most points wins.

It is a system that has worked pretty well for decades – but it has always been far from perfect. In particular, those end-of-season games between teams that have nothing to play for and teams fighting to stay up or to get into Europe.

That league system has also lacked a crucial element: glamour. We now live in a world where TV and marketing values rule – and those are values that very much like drama and glamorous occasions.

Yet how much of that does the current league system give?

Consider this past season in Europe. In Italy, Juventus were champions for a seventh consecutive campaign. In Spain, Barcelona were runaway winners with only one game lost. In Germany, Bayern Munich won for the sixth consecutive season. In England, Manchester City claimed a record 100 points.

In England, Germany and Spain the championships were over a month or so before the official season's end, giving an empty, non-climactic feeling to seasons that already lacked grand finales.

The end-of-season play-off system, widely used in the USA, is designed to ensure that the league campaign ends in excitement.

Although this does not please those who feel strongly that if you finish the season on top of the table you should be the champions, it is highly attractive to the TV and marketing moguls. A flurry of dramatic knockout games is not a bad way to wrap up a season, with baseball's World Series flourishing under this system since 1903 and NFL's Super Bowl since 1969.

Of course, the Americans – in the World Series, Super Bowl, NBA basketball championship and ice hockey's Stanley Cup – can concentrate all their promotional expertise and wealth on the top clubs as there is no promotion and relegation in their pro sports.

Excitement... Columbus Crew (in yellow) and Toronto in last year's MLS Eastern Conference Final

In Latin America – where they have to struggle to somehow make their southern-hemisphere seasons fit in with FIFA's northern hemisphere notions – various versions of a play-off format have been tried, most often by splitting the season into two, with an Apertura and Clausura championship, and a two-leg Final played between the two winners.

Mexico currently uses a rather complicated system of this type, but it is one that evidently attracts fans, with average home crowds for the 2017 finalists being 41,328 at Tigres and 35,801 at Guadalajara.

The play-off system works well, even if it can mean that the team finishing eighth in the regular season may end up as champions. But that is a situation that surely contains something of the excitement of the underdog causing an upset, plus one that could reduce the possibility of the one-team domination exercised by Juventus and Bayern of late.

Play-offs might well bring another bonus for the entire sport by infecting football with a more attacking, risk-taking spirit that is suitable for single knockout games.

Looking at Europe, it is pretty clear that the honour of being champions is not what it used to be.

The Champions League is now full of teams that are not their national champions and winning a domestic championship looks increasingly like a luxury add-on. Nailing down a position in the domestic league high enough to play in the following season's Champions League is now the most important aim.

To repeat: we're in a world where football has proved itself one of the greatest of entertainment attractions, and, like it or not, where television and sponsorship are of immense importance. In such a world, the play-off format seems to be the one that works best.

Let's assign the play-off format to the category that Churchill allegedly applied to democracy as a system of government: "The worst system there is...apart from all the others." WS

"We couldn't ignore this. We can't find out about this five minutes before a press release"

Spanish federation president Luis Rubiales (left) defends the eve-of-tournament sacking of coach Julen Lopetegui

WORLD CUP OMISSIONS

Spain sack Lopetegui

Coach departs on eve of finals after Real Madrid announce him as their next boss

● SPAIN
In an unprecedented move two days before the World Cup finals kicked off, Spain sacked coach **Julen Lopetegui** after it was announced that he will take over at Real Madrid next season.

Spanish FA president Luis Rubiales, who weeks earlier had agreed a two-year contract extension with Lopetegui, revealed that he had only discovered the coach's intentions five minutes before Real Madrid announced Lopetegui as their new man.

The federation's director of football, Fernando Hierro, was put in charge for the campaign in Russia.

Lopetegui had sprung few surprises in his final 23-man squad. The Chelsea pair of **Alvaro Morata** and **Marcos Alonso** were left out, along with Barcelona full-back **Sergi Roberto**.

● GERMANY
Manchester City youngster **Leroy Sane** was the headline-grabbing omission from Joachim Low's final squad, with the coach preferring Julian Brandt instead of Sane.

Sandro Wagner announced his international retirement after being omitted from the provisional 27-man squad. **Bernd Leno**, **Jonathan Tah** and **Nils Petersen** also failed to make the final cut, while 2014 Final hero **Mario Gotze** failed to even make the provisional squad.

● ENGLAND
Midfielder **Jack Wilshere** and goalkeeper **Joe Hart** were left out by manager Gareth Southgate who included the inexperienced Liverpool defender Trent Alexander-Arnold.

● BELGIUM
Roma midfielder **Radja Nainggolan** was controversially left out by coach Roberto Martinez and responded by quitting international football.

● BRAZIL
Paris Saint-Germain full-back **Dani Alves** missed out after he injured knee ligaments at the end of the French league season.

● FRANCE
Coach Didier Deschamps left out forwards **Anthony Martial** and **Alexandre Lacazette**. There was also no place for **Dimitri Payet**, the Marseille attacker who limped out of the Europa League Final with a hamstring injury.

● ARGENTINA
Goalkeeper **Sergio Romero** and midfielder **Manuel Lanzini** both withdrew from the final 23-man squad through injury. Internazionale striker **Mauro Icardi** failed to make Jorge Sampaoli's squad.

> The Spanish federation's director of football, Fernando Hierro, was put in charge for the team in Russia

● COLOMBIA
Controversial Boca Juniors midfielder **Edwin Cardona** was the major absentee from Jose Pekerman's final selection, with Juan Quintero preferred instead.

At home...Martial (left) and Lacazette

● PORTUGAL
There was no place for midfielder **Ruben Neves**, with coach Fernando Santos preferring Manuel Fernandes.

● AUSTRALIA
Coach Bert Van Marwijk cut **James Troisi**, **Josh Brillante**, **Nikita Rukavytsya** and **Fran Karacic** from his final group of 23.

● MEXICO
Porto defender **Diego Reyes** was ruled out on the eve of the finals with a hamstring injury.

● TUNISIA
Star attacker **Youssef Msakni** was left out despite claims from federation

"It's like being at the airport check-in counter en route to Moscow and you are not allowed to board the plane"

Germany's Joachim Low (right) reflects on his decision to cut Leroy Sane and three others from his final 23-man squad

Real choice... Lopetegui

doctors that he could recover from a serious knee injury.

● MOROCCO
Sofiane Boufal was left out by coach Herve Renard after being dropped from Southampton's first team in the final weeks of the Premier League season.

● IRAN
Veteran central defender **Jalal Hosseini** was not included, with Carlos Queiroz concerned about the 36-year-old's ability to last the pace in Russia.

● SERBIA
Central defender **Matija Nastasic** failed to recover from a long-term knee injury in time, while midfielders **Mijat Gacinovic** and **Nemanja Maksimovic** were also cut from the provisional squad.

Shock...no place for Leroy Sane

● DENMARK
A groin injury forced the former Arsenal striker **Nicklas Bendtner** out of the final squad, along with Championship defender **Andreas Bjelland** of Brentford.

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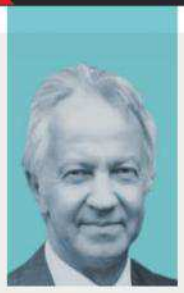


Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

FIFA v UEFA: seconds out

"I have seen the future and it works"... that is the sentiment emanating from FIFA and UEFA as they compete for space on the international stage over the next decade.

If it were only FIFA and UEFA it would be grisly enough, but adding fuel to the growing fires are a string of so-called "stakeholders": from the European Club Association (not all of them) to the European leagues (not all of them) to the international players' union, FIFPro.

Ahead of committee-room battles to come, the ECA has demanded "a new model which reduces the current burden on players". This is a joke. What the ECA really wants is less national-team football so as to create space for more continent club action.

Global...Brazil's Gremio (in stripes) and Pachuca of Mexico in last year's Club World Cup

Whatever happens, there will be a new international calendar from 2024, once the game has battled through the complications thrown up by the November/December rescheduling of the 2022 World Cup finals.

The game has Michel Platini to thank for both Qatar's hosting and the calendar shift. Ex-FIFA president Sepp Blatter has made no secret of how Platini changed his mind from voting for the USA after a luncheon with French president Nicolas Sarkozy and the Gulf state's Emir-to-be.

On the other hand, Blatter also had Platini to thank for creating the unified international-match calendar in the first place. That was the work in the 1990s for which Platini remembered, a decade later, that he had not been paid. Blatter's subsequent gifting of $2million led to disgrace, suspension and football exile for both of them.

A further consequence was the creation of the vacancies which led, in 2016, to Gianni Infantino becoming FIFA president and Aleksander Ceferin sliding into European command. And when it comes to considering who has been the more impressive two years on, Ceferin wins by a country mile.

He and Infantino have been polite around each other, but at some point they will have to come face to face as Infantino appears hell-bent on a land-grab that Europe's federations never envisaged when they originally backed him for the FIFA job.

Everything Infantino undertakes from this point on must be viewed

Suggestion...could Liverpool (in white) and Roma become involved in eight-team Champions League groups?

Showdown...Ceferin (left) and Infantino

Everything Infantino undertakes from this point on must be viewed through the prism of his pursuit of re-election in May next year

through the prism of his pursuit of re-election in May next year. Already the gloves are off. That is why a review of the election rules and regulations was set before FIFA Council in Moscow before the World Cup began.

The needs and designs of Ceferin's UEFA and Infantino's FIFA are clear.

• **UEFA WANTS**...to continue squeezing the Champions League and European Championship for every last TV and sponsorship cent and capitalise on international friendly dates with its Nations League – hoping that TV and sponsors will pay more for competitive football than for friendlies.

Hence everyone is a winner: the national associations, the broadcasters, the advertisers and, above all, UEFA.

Alongside this UEFA is also kicking around the format of the Champions League and the Europa League amid rising concerns about the increasingly repetitive boredom of the group stages. The ECA is considering a format of four eight-team groups. That might suit the big clubs financially but it hardly looks like a crowd-pleaser.

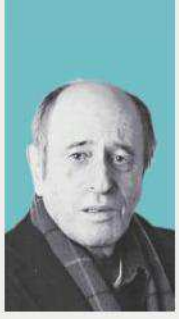
• **FIFA WANTS**...something very different – and there are four reasons: Infantino promised a huge hike in development cash to win the election and must deliver; FIFA must still repair the sponsorship black hole which opened up in its credibility after the FIFAgate corruption scandal; FIFA has been offered a $25billion lure to revamp its competitions; and Infantino wants to be re-elected next year.

One suggestion to help the financial situation is to increase the 2026 World Cup to 48 teams. Infantino endorses this because it fulfils one of his 2016 election manifesto promises – and thus far he has charged through FIFA like a bull in china shop.

He replaced all the top and middle management – with the exception of Marco Villiger, legal director turned joint deputy secretary-general – and expected FIFA Council to rubber-stamp his pursuit of the $25bn carrot. But this is where he came unstuck.

Obtaining the money from a Japanese-led Arab consortium means rebuilding the Club World Cup as a June/July tournament every four years and converting UEFA's Nations League into a global event. As one UEFA official has whispered: "What's he doing, messing around with club football? That's nothing to do with FIFA. He should keep his nose out."

The future of the international calendar is at stake and the outcome could be ugly indeed. WS



Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

Missing...Jack Wilshere will sit out the World Cup

Without Jack Wilshere in their side, England lack a genuine playmaker

It somewhat surprised me when I read that Arsenal's Jack Wilshere, in a phone call from a sycophantic fan, humorously shrugged off the fact that he had been excluded from the 23-man England squad for the World Cup. The following day, however, the same newspaper printed a fulminating diatribe by Wilshere on his exclusion by Gareth Southgate.

I certainly did not blame him; indeed, I thoroughly sympathise with him. As he pointed out, he has played no fewer than 38 matches for Arsenal this season, even if he was obliged to pull out injured from a couple of internationals last year.

"It's about time I had my say," said Wilshere. "It goes without saying that I'm incredibly disappointed to have been left out of the squad...I've felt fit, sharp and strong all season, and believe I should be in the squad. Given the chance, I would have made a real impact."

The looming question must be, who is there in that squad capable of passing the ball to good effect? Another alternative would have been Jonjo Shelvey of Newcastle United. Yes, I know his temperament has tended at times to be explosive, but if he is held to be something of a contentious character, surely this pales into insignificance when his passing can do so much damage.

In the absence of any genuine playmaker, for all his ability on the ball Ruben Loftus-Cheek is scarcely a strategist, it is hard to see this England team springing many surprises in attack.

Meanwhile, Joe Hart is reported to be deeply disappointed at not being one of the three designated goalkeepers, but since he could not even command a place in the West Ham United team I can hardly sympathise with him. So it looks as if Everton's Jordan Pickford will be the first choice. Yes, he meets the current criterion of distributing the ball when he has it, but surely this is a secondary feature. The basic aspects of his game are not wholly convincing.

Recall...Gary Cahill

> In the absence of any genuine playmaker, it is hard to see this England team springing many surprises in attack

Centre-back is a worrying problem, as evidenced by the fact that the veteran Gary Cahill has been recalled, suggesting an element of desperation.

John Stones is a centre-half of youth and great promise but hasn't held a regular place in the Manchester City team. Elegant on the ball, he tends to give away too many second chances.

On the face of it, England should negotiate their opening two matches without excessive difficulty but then come Belgium, who should have a palpable chance of the ultimate title. In Eden Hazard and Kevin De Bruyne they have two of the best attackers in the game.

Support... Sam Allardyce

Allardyce re-writes history at Everton

Hard indeed to feel sorry for Sam Allardyce, whose dismissal by Everton left him with the cool compensation of over £5million.

You might have thought this was more than enough to soothe his bruised ego. But, alas, not a bit of it.

Though it was an open secret that the Everton fans at large were longing for him to go, even if beyond doubt he saved the club from relegation which was looming when he took over, Allardyce insists that the fans did not want him to go – in which case they had a funny way of showing it – and that he was a victim of press pressure.

"Most of them didn't want me out," he bewilderingly says of the fans, whose hostility was manifest and highly vocal.

"It all seemed to be done and dusted before I got to see the owner. It was right out in the open for a couple of days.

"Unfortunately this seems to be the way of the world these days."

Really?

World Cup winner Ray Wilson remembered

Sad to know of the death of Ray Wilson, that resourceful left-back, with dementia so familiar an affliction, alas, of veteran footballers. It clearly comes from heading the ball, and Wilson's distinguished career was blemished by one disastrous header early in the 1966 World Cup Final at Wembley, when he glanced a high cross into the path of West Germany's Helmut Haller, who promptly scored,

It was an incident of which he was crudely and callously reminded that evening on a hotel balcony by the BBC sports commentator David Coleman. "Everyone makes mistakes," said Ray wretchedly, but he did not make many.

At a time when, unlike today, footballers were not known for their manifold tattoos, Ray had a small one on his forearm reading "Egypt Never Again", presumably a reference to his military service.

On retirement, he became of all things an undertaker.

He deserved his World Cup medal – that mistake made no difference.

Triumph...Wilson with the trophy

Manager McClaren's confidence is unconvincing

Another manager who has been blowing his own trumpet is Steve McClaren, once cruelly nicknamed the '"Wally with the Brolly" when in charge of England.

Now, somewhat surprisingly appointed to manage Queens Park Rangers by his old friend, the owner Tony Fernandes, he says: "It's a challenge that I am excited by. I've followed the club closely over the last five years.

"I've seen the progress, work and changes that have gone on, especially over the last two years in strengthening the squad and getting the budget down."

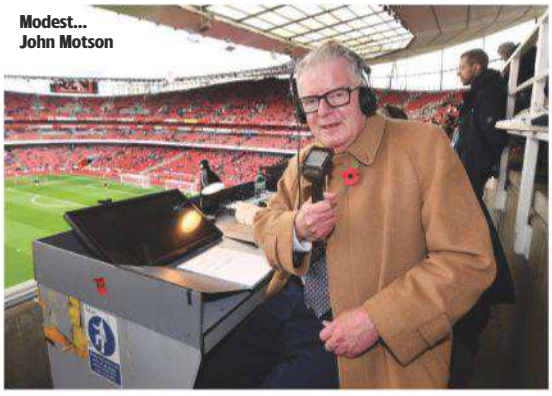
Well, sort of. There is still that grotesque £40million financial-fairplay fine to pay, though heaven knows how.

"I like to play attractive, attacking football and we've got young, hungry footballers here who can play that way," he adds, although they seldom did under the departing manager, Ian Holloway.

Still, there is nothing like optimism and let us only hope that some of McClaren's brio will communicate itself to the team.

I remain to be convinced.

Ranger...McClaren



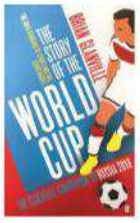
Modest... John Motson

Meticulous Motty will be much missed

A fond farewell to that likeable and ever-modest TV commentator John Motson. His years of celebrity never for a moment went to his head. When asked to sign autographs, you might hear him asking in turn how the admirer wanted them written.

I'm sure he could have gone on for some years had he wanted. Ever meticulous, he could sometimes be seen almost in a trance-like state before a game as he tensely concentrated on the various names he would shortly be having to pronounce.

He will certainly be missed.



● A new edition of Brian Glanville's book, *The Story of the World Cup: 2018*, is published by Faber & Faber (£15.99)

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PARMA BACK IN SERIE A

Arguably the most positive story of the entire Italian season concerned the return to Serie A of Parma Calcio 1913, the club that earned itself many international fans as it won the European Cup-winners Cup in 1993 and then two UEFA Cups, in 1995 and 1999.

What's more, Parma staged their comeback the hard way, winning three promotions in a row: from the semi-amateur Serie D to Lega Pro to Serie B and now, this spring, to Serie A.

It was only three years ago that, in the wake of financial collapse with debts of €22.6million, Parma were born again in the fourth tier of Italian football thanks to the investment of two groups: Nuovo Inizio ("new beginnings"), who were made up of seven local businessmen, and Parma Partecipazioni Calcistiche (PPC), which was supported mainly by the fans.

Parma's bankruptcy in 2015 marked the end of a difficult period which had begun in 2003 when the club's then-owners, dairy multinational Parmalat, collapsed in a spectacular €14billion crash. Deprived of the backing of a company which in 2002 was valued at €3.7bn and which employed 30,000 people in 30 countries, Parma never really recovered.

And so the club that gave Milan and Italy coach Arrigo Sacchi a breakthrough job in Serie C in the mid-1980s, and the club which a decade later gave 16-year-old Gigi Buffon his Serie A debut, fell off the top table of Italian football.

To their credit, Parma have pulled off the fastest recovery ever seen in Italian football, being the first club to win three straight promotions. It now remains to be seen where they go from here.

Everything changed in November when the club was bought by the Chinese group DeSports, led by entrepreneur Jiang Lizhang, who paid €15m for a 60 per cent holding in the club. A 30 per cent stake remains with Nuovo Inizio while PPC holds the remaining 10 per cent.

But can the club that once featured not only Sacchi and Buffon, but also players such as Hernan Crespo, Hristo Stoichkov, Gianfranco Zola, Faustino Asprilla, Lilian Thuram and Fabio Cannavaro climb back to the heights of 20 years ago? For the time being, the answer obviously has to be no – but the new owner's market spending will clearly be closely scrutinised.

As someone with different sporting interests – including a five per cent holding in NBA team Minnesota Timberwolves, plus majority holdings in Spanish club Granada, Portuguese club Tondela and Chinese club Chongqing Dangdai Lifan – Jiang's approach will be interesting. Following Chinese takeovers of Internazionale and Milan, this latest far-east edition to the ranks of Italian club owners remains something of a mystery. Current reports suggest Parma will have €45m to spend this summer, but Jiang seems to prefer the idea of picking up young players from the likes of Inter, Juventus, Roma, Milan and Napoli.

For now, however, the new owner is insisting Serie A survival is the number one priority for the coming season.

Paddy Agnew

Back...Parma celebrate beating Spezia to clinch promotion

Up...owner Jiang Lizhang

MINNOWS UFA REACH NEW HEIGHTS

A little can go a long way in football. Just ask the fans of undersized Russian outfit Ufa who, after seeing their team record a best-ever sixth place in the top flight, are now looking forward to a first taste of continental action, in next season's Europa League.

Founded as recently as 2010 and members of the Russian Premier League for just four years, the club from the western republic of Bashkortostan is an extremely small-scale operation. Average attendances at their Neftyanik Stadium are just 6,600 and they survive on a stripped-back annual budget of around €15million – as opposed to, say, Zenit, who spend a whopping €160m per year – while their squad is crammed with free transfers, loanees and bargain-basement outcasts.

> Ufa is not even especially a football city, with the vast majority of its sports fans preferring to follow local ice hockey team Salavat Yulaev

Indeed, Ufa is not even especially a football city, with the vast majority of its sports fans preferring to follow the local ice hockey team, Salavat Yulaev.

Yet what the upstarts lack in tradition and financial resources they make up for with stability. General manager Shamil Gazizov is an expert at identifying value for money in the transfer market and the club has an excellent reputation for giving youth a chance. Prior to moving to Manchester City in July 2016, Ukrainian left-back Oleksandr Zinchenko cut his professional teeth with Ufa, and this season a number of their side have caught the eye, including Romanian centre-back Ionut Nedelcearu, Georgian stopper Jimmy Tabidze, right-back Dmitri Zhivoglyadov and 19-year-old schemer Ivan Oblyakov, an ex-Zenit academy pupil of much promise.

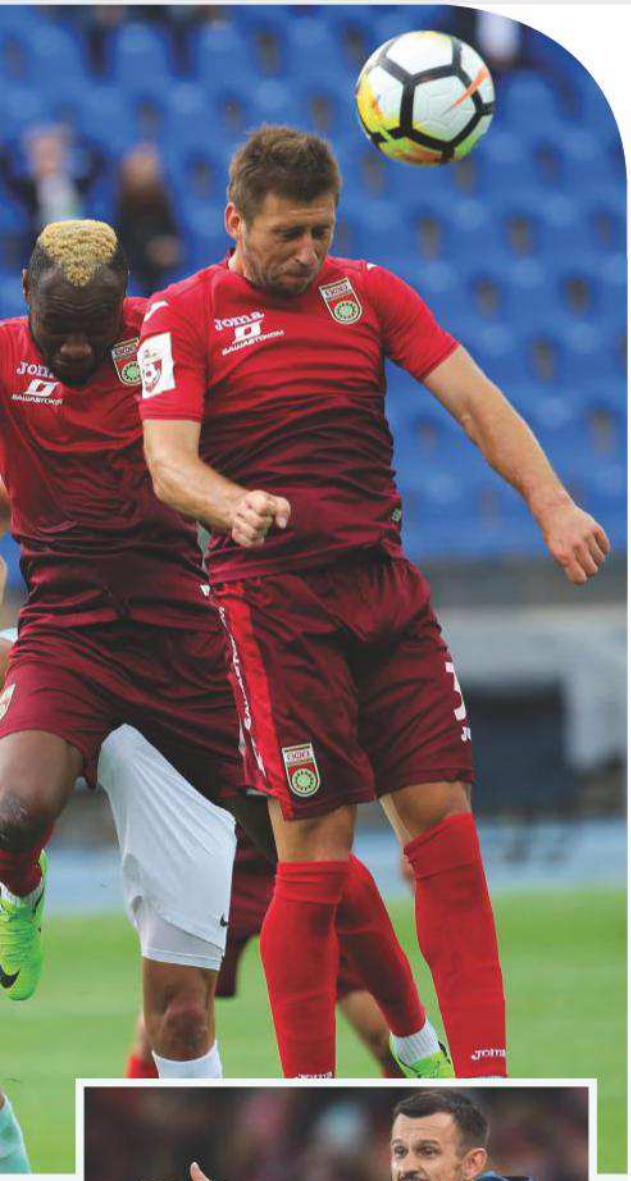
Solid...Ufa (in red) keep out Tosno

Attacking force...Ufa striker Sly Igboun (left) gets the better of Ruslan Kambolov of Rubin Kazan

Ufa have also chosen wisely in their coaching appointments of late. Although only at the helm for the first-half of the 2016-17 season, the Belarussian Viktor Goncharenko – who is now in charge at CSKA Moscow – did an excellent job of assembling an homogenous counter-attacking unit which his successor, the former Russian international midfielder Sergei Semak, sensibly stuck with.

Lining up in either a 5-4-1 or 5-3-2, Semak's side were neither stylish nor expansive last season, netting only 34 goals in 30 league games. But where they did score heavily was in the functionality stakes. Disciplined and co-ordinated, they were strong-willed and tactically astute, taking four points from champions Lokomotiv Moscow, drawing twice with CSKA and winning 1-0 at fourth-place Krasnodar.

Within the collective-first framework, several individuals have enhanced their reputations, including midfielder Dmitry



Moving on... Sergei Semak

Stotsky – who will be at Krasnodar next term – Croat midfielder Ivan Paurevic, towering keeper Aleksandr Belenov and livewire Nigeria's Sly Igboun, who is by far their most potent attacking weapon.

While qualification for Europe was thoroughly deserved, it was not quite all Ufa's own work. Russia's third Europa League slot should have gone to Tosno, but the Cup winners – who were also relegated – failed to get a UEFA licence.

Sadly for Ufa they will not have Semak to lead them into continental competition as he has left to replace Roberto Mancini at Zenit.

Nick Bidwell

EL MAESTRO, THE UNLIKELY HERO

Name change ...the former Nestor Jevtic

Photo: Lukas Grinaj

After a gap of 45 years, Spartak Trnava claimed a league title in dramatic circumstances. A 2-0 win over DAC Dunajska Streda in early May saw three red cards in the first 12 minutes and a crucial early penalty, before a near-capacity crowd swarmed onto the pitch at the end.

And at the centre of the red-and-black melee, being thrown high into the air by his own fans, was a man named El Maestro.

The Belgrade-born 35-year-old, who spent most of his youth in the UK while war raged in Yugoslavia, had engineered a remarkable campaign.

Having changed his name from Nestor Jevtic to Nestor El Maestro, he arrived in Trnava last June – with his 24-year-old brother, Nikon, as his assistant coach – to restore success to a club with the most passionate and numerous fan base in the country – albeit one which had claimed just one domestic cup and three league runners-up spots since Slovak independence in 1993.

As a teenager growing up in West Sussex, El Maestro was astute enough to quickly realise he wouldn't ever have the talent to make it as a professional player so he began to coach local park teams. Having made a few contacts, he gained his licence and, after bombarding numerous clubs with letters, was hired by the junior academy at West Ham United, where Nikon had once been on the club's books as a schoolboy.

> El Maestro was astute enough to quickly realise he wouldn't ever have the talent to make it as a professional player so he began to coach local park teams

After a spell working at Austria Vienna, and still in his early twenties, he then took a series of assistant-coaching posts in the German-speaking world, most notably at Schalke and Hanover.

He returned to Austria Vienna in 2016 and soon came across a feisty opponent in the Europa League: Spartak Trnava.

In front of a packed Stadion Antona Malatinskeho, the Slovaks took Austria Vienna to penalties. El Maestro was impressed and kept in touch with the management. A year later they hired him.

Bringing with him a speedy left-footed Austrian by the name of Marvin Egho, El Maestro struggled at first but then put together a winning streak of 11 games.

Egho found a knack of scoring vital goals, including a late strike that sank DAC in September, while the team discovered a new solidity, thanks to home-town keeper Martin Vantruba, who had returned on loan from Slavia Prague, hefty midfielder and former Austrian international Yasin Pehlivan, and reliable centre-back Boris Godal.

After further defeats to Slovan and Zilina, Spartak went through February and March unbeaten. Despite losing on penalties to Slovan in the cup Final, they went into May's league game with DAC knowing that a win would seal the league championship.

Within six minutes, their opponents had gone a man down and Godal put Spartak ahead from the penalty spot. Within another six minutes, the referee had dished out two more red cards, one to each team. After a tense hour or so, Egho put the game – and the title – beyond anyone else's reach.

However, back in Europe's premier competition for the first time since 1974, Spartak will have to make do without El Maestro next season as he has since joined Bulgarian side CSKA Sofia.

Peterjon Cresswell

TROUBLED TIMES FOR ANDERLECHT

Anderlecht are in chaos, having gone through three coaches, two presidents and finishing with no silverware.

Roger Vanden Stock was feeling confident last summer. His coach, Rene Weiler, had won the Belgian title in his first campaign in charge of Anderlecht and, as president, he believed that the next one was in the bag too.

Not only was he wrong on that score, the season also saw the end of a half-century of the Vanden Stock family's rule.

The campaign started promisingly enough. Long-tern sporting director Herman Van Holsbeeck signed keeper Matz Sels on loan from Newcastle United, midfielder Sven Kums arrived from Watford via Udinese, and Nigerian striker Henry Onyekuru, who had been the league's leading scorer the term before, joined on loan from Everton.

Van Holsbeeck talked about a "dream team" being assembled. The media agreed with him and Anderlecht were seen as a shoo-in for the title.

Weiler soon added the Belgian Super Cup to the trophy cabinet, but dark clouds had been hovering since the Swiss coach's arrival and pundits such as Marc Degryse had been arguing that Weiler was not a good fit for a club where the fans expect champagne football.

Weiler never liked the media and said the club had a choice between playing attractively or winning games. But with goal-hungry strikers Onyekuru and Lukasz Teodorczyk in the squad, he was obliged to play attacking football.

In the event, results were poor. Things came to a head when Weiler dropped Kums, who had been brought in to replace Youri Tielemans. Van Holsbeeck and Vanden Stock were not best pleased at the player's sudden demise and Weiler was forced to recall him to the squad for Anderlecht's Champions League opener at Bayern Munich.

Incredibly, Weiler opted to play the midfielder as a libero at the Allianz Arena – and after just 11 minutes Kums was sent off for fouling Robert Lewandowski.

A draw at Kortrijk followed, and with chants of "Weiler Out" on the terraces it was no surprise when the coach resigned just six weeks into the season.

Second best...Olivier Deschacht (left) and Leander Dendoncker struggle to contain Standard Liege's Mehdi Carcela

His replacement was under-21 boss Nicolas Frutos, an ex-club favourite. But the inexperienced Argentinian was never likely to get the job full time, and so it proved as he was given four matches.

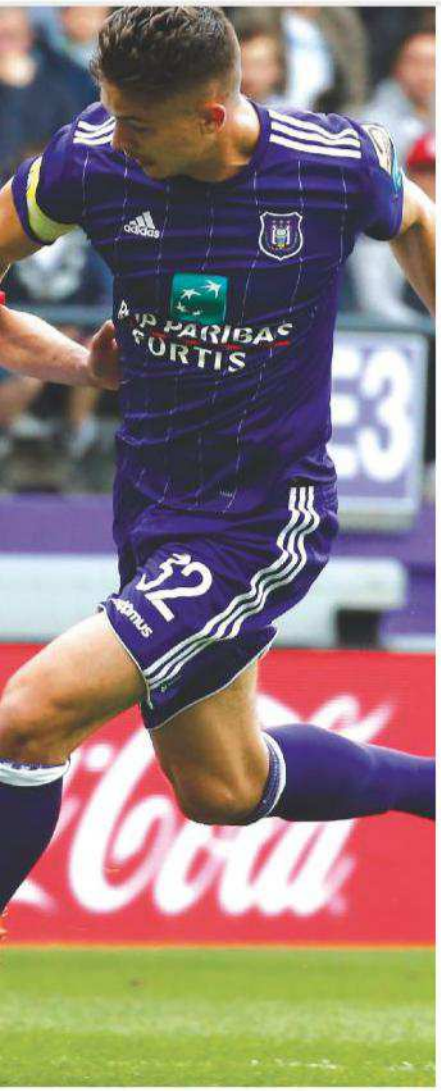
Anderlecht then had a stroke of luck when Hein Vanhaezebrouck ran into problems at Gent, who the outspoken coach had taken to the title in 2015. His teams played attacking football, he had a reputation of getting the best from his players and, with a disappointing spell at Genk the only blemish on his record, he looked a perfect fit for Anderlecht.

Vanhaezebrouck knew that the Anderlecht squad needed spicing up, but he got a shock in December when the club was sold to billionaire Marc Coucke, who is as far from the Vanden Stocks on the personality spectrum as can be.

As Coucke already owned top-flight Oostende, the deal could not go through until March 2018. With the club in limbo, the January transfer window was a joke.

With Van Holsbeeck still in charge of transfers, creative players such as Nicolae Stanciu and Sofiane Hanni were released, while the ultimate fiasco was the failure to bring in Aleksander Mitrovic on loan from Newcastle United. He arrived in Brussels with his boots but no one could

Ambitious...Marc Coucke has grand plans for Anderlecht



stump up the necessary €200,000.

Anderlecht struggled on and managed to finish the regular season in second place. With the points being halved ahead of the play-offs they were only six points behind the leaders, Club Brugge. With three games to play, they were in with a chance of the title – until they lost all three matches.

Despite the family's brewery connections – and their involvement in a bribery scandal in which it was claimed that Constant Vanden Stock had "fixed it" for Anderlecht to beat Nottingham Forest in the 1984 UEFA Cup semi-finals – the Vanden Stocks had been rather sober owners of the club.

Coucke, meanwhile, has appeared on reality TV shows and had a YouTube hit. He made a fortune by selling his company Omega-Pharma for €3.6billion and has promised to build a team that will make teams like Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich be afraid of visiting Anderlecht in the future.

However, with Club Brugge looking good and with Michel Preud'homme back in charge at Standard Liege, his first job will be to stabilise the present and then try to re-instate his club as the kings of Belgian football.

John Chapman

LAUTERN DROP TO LEVEL THREE

Disastrous... Kaiserslautern are facing third-division football next term

For everyone connected with Kaiserslautern, one of the biggest names in German club football, the date of April 27, 2018 will forever be known as the darkest hour in their 118-year history – the moment the once-indomitable *Roten Teufel* ("red devils") suffered a first-ever relegation to the third division.

Founding members of the Bundesliga in 1963, German league champions on four occasions and twice winners of the domestic cup, Lautern are a sporting and social institution in the south-western Rhineland-Palainate region. They also strike a chord on a national level, revered as small-town overachievers and generally considered a part of the country's football fabric.

Much of their popularity stems from West Germany's against-the-odds victory over Hungary in the 1954 World Cup Final. Skipper and inside-forward Fritz Walter was one of five Kaiserslautern players who contributed to the "Miracle of Berne" and ever since the club has enjoyed iconic status.

Backed by a fanatical following, Kaiserslautern's speciality was cutting big-city teams down to size – and they certainly did that in the never-to-be-forgotten 1997-98 campaign, becoming the first newly promoted side to claim the Bundesliga title.

Such glory days now seem a long way off. Of the last 12 years they have spent 10 in the second division, bedevilled by financial problems caused by the high cost of refurbishing their Betzenberg stadium for the 2006 World Cup, along with poor player recruitment and sheer boardroom incompetence.

Last season was one long highway to hell for Lautern. From July to May, nothing went right. They lost over half their league fixtures and were rooted to the bottom of the table for virtually the entire campaign. In a sure sign of a crumbling edifice, they employed four head coaches, including the ill-fated former Luxembourg international Jeff Strasser, who was hospitalised with heart irregularities during a game against Darmstadt in January. It later emerged a virus had sparked his cardiac difficulties, but he still had to step down.

While director of sport Martin Bader speaks optimistically of a renaissance – "We're on the floor right now, but picking ourselves up will be very satisfying" – it will not be easy to bounce back. Club bosses expect a €24million reduction in revenue, with their operating budget halved to €5m and, with most of the squad not having contracts valid for the third tier, a mass exodus is on the cards.

> "We're on the floor right now, but picking ourselves up will be very satisfying"
> **Martin Bader, Kaiserslautern director of sport**

To save money the club intend to close specific sections of the ground next term and hope that business partners and regional bodies will invest in the team.

"In both a sporting and economic sense, we'll need a huge effort in the coming months," says chief executive Michael Klatt. "These aren't great times for us at the Betzenberg."

That is possibly the understatement of the year.

Nick Bidwell

Double...Alexandre Guedes scored both Cup Final goals

AVES ADD TO SPORTING TURMOIL

The build-up to the Portuguese Cup Final was all about the high-profile meltdown at Sporting. The Lisbon club's players had been attacked by their own supporters during a training session, the president and the squad were at war, and coach Jorge Jesus was apparently about to be sacked. By the end of the match, however, the story had shifted to the momentous achievement by a team from a town of just 8,000 inhabitants.

Two goals by striker Alexandre Guedes, a former youth player at Sporting, earned Clube Desportivo das Aves a thoroughly deserved 2-1 victory and provided an enduring image at the Estadio Nacional as Aves fans, who were packed into a small section of the venue, joyously celebrated with the players in the early evening sunshine in an arena otherwise laid bare by the disappointed Sporting followers who had long since left.

To put the magnitude of the upset into context, Aves have spent only four of their 87 years in the top division.

The season had already been a notable success for the northern club, given that they had beaten relegation from the Primeira Liga for the first time, having gone straight back down on the previous three occasions they had achieved promotion to the top flight.

Aves' well-drilled game plan took full advantage of the fragile psychological state of Sporting, whose players visibly wilted when Guedes scored the opening goal in the 16th minute. Sharp in their passing, the underdogs launched a series of speedy breaks throughout, with both goals coming from counter-attacks.

"The Sporting commotion was good for us because we could focus all week on coach Jose Mota's tactics without the spotlight on us," said Aves' Brazilian midfielder Nildo Petrolina afterwards.

Victory was also a personal triumph for former Benfica and Portugal keeper Joaquim Silva, who finally lifted the trophy at the age of 42 having twice made it to the Final only to end up on the losing side.

Quim, as he is known in Portuguese football, contributed decisively to his side's triumph, denying Sporting's Gelson Martins in one-on-one duels twice in quick succession in the opening stages and helping Aves to survive a late surge of Sporting pressure – during which his opposite number, Rui Patricio, even joined the attack in a desperate attempt to grab an equaliser.

"Am I the hero? No, it's all these players who are heroes after a difficult season, and also the people of Vila das Aves," said a beaming Quim moments after the final whistle had blown in an on-pitch interview.

"I promised I'd do everything to make this club stay up, but winning the Portuguese Cup wasn't part of the plan!"

Tom Kundert

> "The Sporting commotion was good for us because we could focus all week on coach Jose Mota's tactics without the spotlight on us"
>
> **Aves' Brazilian midfielder, Nildo Petrolina**

Veteran...Quim lifts the Portuguese Cup

KILLIE LEAD REVIVAL IN THE PREMIERSHIP

If the Scottish Tourist Board is looking for someone to persuade people to visit, they could do a lot worse than ask Steve Clarke. While the former Chelsea defender is an unlikely poster boy, he has become an excellent advocate for Scottish football since returning after 30 years in England.

Looking to restore his reputation after being sacked by West Bromwich Albion and then Reading, Clarke has certainly done that since joining Killie last October, taking the team from bottom of the table to a fifth-place finish and their best-ever top-flight total of 59 points.

That work, on a meagre budget, earned Clarke the Manager of the Year award from Scottish football writers – which is a huge honour given the success of Brendan Rodgers in leading Celtic to a seventh title in a row.

Rodgers and Clarke have a shared background, with not just Chelsea and Reading on their CVs but also Liverpool – where Clarke was assistant to Kenny Dalglish until Rodgers' arrival in 2012.

What they also have in common is huge appreciation of the merits of the Scottish Premiership.

The SPL was derided as "a pub league" by some of Clarke's former Chelsea team-mates when Rodgers created Celtic's 'Invincible' season of 2016-17, but the Kilmarnock boss is having none of it.

"The quality of the game here is better than it gets credit for," says Clarke, who joined Chelsea from St Mirren in 1987 and won the European Cup-winners Cup in 1998. He was then Jose Mourinho's assistant before going into management at West Brom – who he took to eighth in the Premier League – and Reading.

Being out of work for a year prompted the 54-year-old to move back to Scotland and Kilmarnock, where his older brother, Paul, played between 1975 and 1986.

Prolific...Kilmarnock's Kris Boyd was the league's top scorer

Killie have been part of a feel-good factor in the Scottish Premiership, which saw attendances rise 14 per cent, with more than 3.6million people coming through the gates – which is not bad for a population of 5.2m.

Kilmarnock's crowds have doubled, and if not quite matching the days when they were Scottish champions in 1965 and reached the last four of the Fairs Cup in 1967, it is a step in the right direction.

"Over 6,000 people turning up now is great," says Clarke. "When I was young I used to come and watch my brother play, so I knew the level of support Kilmarnock could get. The town looks to have an identity with their football club and that had drifted. I thought I could make a small difference.

Last chance saloon... Clarke took charge in October last year

"I've had the high money and big pressure. But job satisfaction is every bit as important as the big pay cheque. If I'm being honest, it was probably my last chance as a manager. It's very rare you'll get a third chance.

"If I'd come up here and it had gone pear-shaped then it would've been difficult for me to get back."

Clarke's Kilmarnock soared up the table with a run that included two victories over Rangers and one at home to Celtic. Veteran striker Kris Boyd became the Premiership's top scorer, while former West Brom midfielder Youssuf Mulumbu did so well that the club turned down a bid from Bordeaux.

> "The quality of the game here is better than it gets credit for"
> Kilmarnock manager Steve Clarke

Celtic boss Rodgers says the season just gone was much tougher that the one before, with the title not settled until April 29 – in contrast to early finishes in England, France and Germany.

If all that sounds like "a pub league" then perhaps some other places with bigger budgets should have some of what the Scots are drinking...

Phil Gordon

Common ground... Brendan Rodgers (right) with Clarke

XAMAX BACK IN THE TOP FLIGHT

Six years after being declared bankrupt and kicked out of the league following the calamitous administration of Russian businessman Bulaet Chagaev, Neuchatel Xamax are back in the Swiss top flight.

Under the presidency of local businessman Christian Binggelli, the team has worked its way up through four tiers of the league in six seasons to regain what local fans feel is their rightful place in the Swiss Super League.

It was a happy ending for the club, which counts Roy Hodgson among its former coaches and whose ramshackle Maladiere stadium became an elephants' graveyard for top European sides in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

> "We are not taking any financial risks. We want to remain prudent"
> **Christian Binggeli**

Chagaev took over the relegation-threatened club in May 2011, saying he wanted to take them into the Champions League, and among the initially ambitious plans there was even talk of a role for Diego Maradona.

But a month later the players got a taste of his management style at the Swiss Cup Final when he burst into the dressing room and yelled: "I'll kill you all."

The following months were pure farce as the entire administrative staff were fired, leaving the club unable to print tickets and having to rely on pieces of paper with the amount hand-written.

Six different coaches were employed, and the club were deducted eight points for failing to pay wages. Eventually, the club were kicked out of the league in January 2012 after a document that Chagaev had offered as a financial guarantee turned out to be false.

He was arrested, released on bail and briefly returned to the country for a hearing in 2013. In December 2016 he was sentenced in absence to three years' in jail for criminal mismanagement, embezzlement, attempted fraud and falsification of documents.

Until Chagaev appeared on the scene, Xamax had prided itself on being a small, family club – so much so that former owner Gilberto Facchinnetto would invite players to his home for dinner, with his wife doing the cooking.

Founded in 1912 as plain Xamax, the club became Neuchatel Xamax in 1970 after a merger with FC Cantonal. It reached its heyday with Swiss titles in 1987 and 1988, and some memorable European campaigns which saw Real Madrid (twice), Bayern Munich, Sporting and Dynamo Kiev all beaten at Stade de la Maladiere.

Backing...the fans stuck with their side

On their way back...Xamax will play in the top flight next season

Following the club's expulsion, a group of businessmen, headed by Binggeli, were left to pick up the pieces, and with a budget of 600,000 Swiss francs they were admitted to the 2 Liga interregional – the fifth tier of the Swiss league pyramid – for the 2012-13 season.

Binggeli's business makes equipment for dental surgeries so he clearly knows the drill, with the 65-year-old investing wisely in rebuilding the club.

Neuchatel immediately won promotion by finishing top of group three with one defeat in 26 games and that took them to the 1.Liga Classic – where they won promotion via the play-offs, beating Fribourg in the semi-finals and Baden in the Final.

They made it three in a row in 2014-15 as they finished top of the third division by a whopping 13 points from Koniz. Experienced coach Michel Decastel took over at that point, but the second-tier

Challenge League proved a lot tougher and it took them three seasons to make the final leap.

In 2015-16 they finished second to Lausanne-Sport and the following season found themselves up against Zurich, who had been relegated and – as expected – went back up at the first attempt. Last season, after luring back a number of players with top-flight experience, there was no mistake as Xamax sealed promotion with six games to spare.

Unfortunately, European football has changed greatly and there is unlikely to be a return to the days when the Maladiere – now a modern arena built on top of a shopping centre – hosted Europe's top clubs.

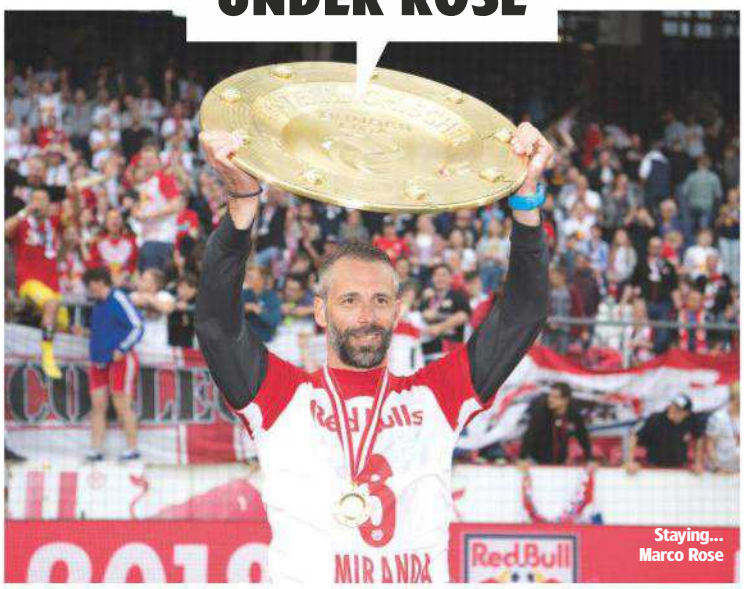
Binggeli said the club would have a budget of around five million Swiss francs for next season, less than half that of the bigger clubs, and he would set the modest target of avoiding relegation.

"We are not taking any financial risks," he said. "We want to remain prudent."

Brian Homewood

Bust...Neuchatel were declared bankrupt in 2012

SALZBURG BLOOMING UNDER ROSE



Staying... Marco Rose

Another league title, another failure to qualify for the Champions League group stage and still as unpopular as ever among neutrals – it seemed like just another typical season in the recent history of Red Bull Salzburg. But last term there was an added extra with a run to the Europa League semi-finals.

A marathon season began on July 11 with a Champions League second round qualifier away to Maltese champions Hibernian and ended 62 matches later on May 27 with their final league match against Austria Vienna.

It started in familiar fashion, with key players leaving, a new coach and a 10th successive failure to make it through the Champions League qualifiers.

Left-back Wanderson departed for Krasnodar and midfielder Konrad Leimer went to RB Leipzig for a combined €15million. Coach Oscar Garcia accepted an offer from Saint-Etienne – where he was subsequently fired six months later – and the reigns were handed to youth-team coach Marco Rose, who played under Jurgen Klopp at Mainz – and it was the current Liverpool manager who inspired him to take up coaching.

> "If we knew why attendances were poor, we would do something immediately"
>
> Marco Rose

Rose had previously led Salzburg to the Under-19 Champions League title, beating Barcelona, Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain on the way to becoming the first Austrian team to win a UEFA competition at any age level.

Rose, the 11th coach since the start of the Red Bull era in 2005, promoted several players from that team, but hopes of making the Champions League ended against Rijeka in the qualifiers.

In the league, a 1-0 defeat at Sturm Graz followed by a 2-2 draw with Rapid Vienna raised a few questions, but the side soon imposed their familiar high-tempo pressing game and eventually finished 18 points clear of their rivals.

However, their real achievement was in the Europa League, where they topped their group unbeaten and then knocked out Real Socieded, Borussia Dortmund and Lazio before finally losing to Marseille in extra time in the semi-finals.

Despite their form, crowds remained poor with an average of 7,616 for home games – a legacy of Red Bull's behaviour after their takeover when they changed the club's colours and tried to wipe out its history, prompting fans to form a breakaway club.

"If we knew why attendances were poor, we'd do something immediately," said Rose. "It's a fact we have to live with. The boys do their best to get the people into the stadium and inspire the public. There must be reasons for it, maybe the past also plays a role. But it is not my job to deal with it in detail. We cannot force anyone to a visit."

But the good news for the club is that Rose has agreed to extend his contract, saying: "I feel comfortable here and can identify with the club's ability to play football successfully with young players."

Brian Homewood

POWER SHIFT AS OLYMPIAKOS IMPLODE

Following seven seasons of total domination in the Greek Superleague, Olympiakos finally had their bubble of omnipotence pricked. Complacent, error-prone and arguably lucky to finish third, they ended up no fewer than 13 points adrift of new champions AEK and seven behind runners-up PAOK.

It was the classic fall from grace, a campaign in which everything went horribly wrong in every possible way.

There were countless new signings who flopped, notably ex-Partizan striker Uros Djurdjevic, Nigerian front-man Emmanuel Emenike and Belgian midfielder Vadis Odjidja-Ofoe; the dressing room was disjointed and passive; they were docked three points after fans rioted during a defeat at home to AEK in February; and last, but not least, there was the chronic instability in the coaching department, with four bosses – Besnik Hasi, Takis Lemonis, Christos Kontis and Oscar Garcia – coming and going at breakneck speed.

By early April, Olympiakos' title hopes were effectively over, prompting club president Evangelos Marinakis to rail against his under-performing players, collectively fining the first team €400,000 and promising to replace senior pros with homegrown youngsters in the final few weeks of the season.

"You have it all – but you have no respect," the furious Marinakis informed his squad. "You only care about your houses and cars, not the club. When I come back here next time I only want to see the honest guys here, those who love and respect Olympiakos. The players from the academy definitely want it more and they will play the remaining matches. I've had enough of you. We don't want disinterested players here."

With Olympiakos in abdication mode, AEK were only too willing to pick up the sovereign's sceptre. The Athenian yellow-and-blacks were the most consistent team in the country, losing only twice in 30 league games and, thanks to the organisational skills of Spanish coach Manolo Jimenez, conceding just 12 times.

Top dogs for the first time in 24 years, AEK also were brimming with individual class. Bosnian Ognjen Vranjes was their tower of power at the back, Portuguese midfielder Andre Simoes never stopped biting into tackles, while winger Lazaros Christodoulopoulos proved himself a game-changer and Croat striker Marko Livaja did a fine job of leading the line.

Naturally AEK fans would like to think that a power shift has taken place, but it may be a little soon to tell. Jimenez has left to join Spanish second-tier side Las Palmas and his successor, former Panathinaikos boss Marinos Ouzounidis, will need time to assert his authority.

Olympiakos have absolutely no intention of remaining among the also-rans and they have a new leader in the well-regarded Portuguese coach Pedro Martins. One of his key missions is to rebuild the team around a locally sourced spine and one of that inner guard will be Christodoulopoulos, who has been lured away from AEK.

Expect a three-cornered Greek title tussle next season involving AEK, Olympiakos and PAOK.

Nick Bidwell

Champions...AEK celebrate in Athens

> "You have it all – but you have no respect. You only care about your houses and cars, not the club"
>
> **Olympiakos president Evangelos Marinakis lays into his players**

Not happy... Evangelos Marinakis

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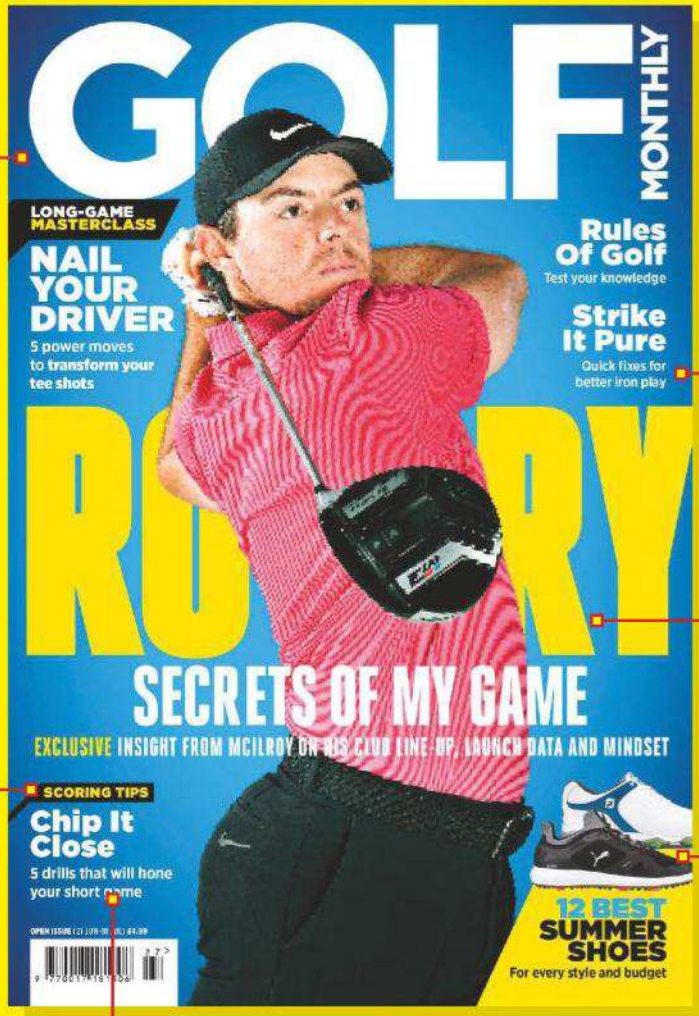

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ZIDANE SIGNS OFF AT THE TOP

The Frenchman led Real Madrid to a record 13th title – their third successive victory – and then quit

Zinedine Zidane's decision to step down after two-and-a-half years of remarkable success on his coaching debut with world and European champions Real Madrid was a surprise – but not that much of a surprise.

After all, what was there left for a man who won everything as a player and then as a coach? Especially as the looming prospect was rebuilding a team replete with fading, battered egos and suffering all the unpleasant consequences of inconsistent results larded over with consequent bad temper and impatience among directors, fans and the media.

Zidane had a taste of what is to come within minutes of the final whistle of the 3-1 victory over Liverpool in Kiev, with Cristiano Ronaldo and two-goal hero Gareth Bale both talking about what the future might hold. So the Frenchman's triumphal press conference was not about celebration but consternation.

"That's not what's on my mind," said Zidane tersely when asked about his star players. "We have to focus solely on this latest major achievement and then we'll see what happens." What happened was that he stole a march on both of them by telling club president Florentino Perez that the team needed a change.

Not that this would have been obvious to a stranger who had wandered in off the street and witnessed how events had unfolded on the pitch.

Liverpool had outscored Madrid in the tournament prior to the Final by 40 goals to 30, but there was no first-half goal to reward expectations. Marcelo delivered the first attempt on goal with a long-range, angled drive which scudded safely wide, after which 15-goal top scorer Ronaldo, having started on the left, suddenly emerged at speed on the right to unleash an angled drive over the top of Loris Karius' goal.

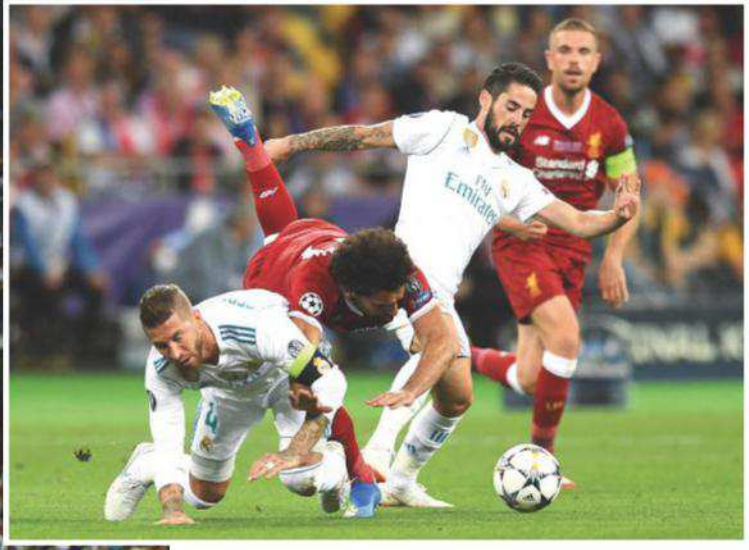
Up and away... Zinedine Zidane

Then it was Liverpool's turn. Virgil Van Dijk headed a Mohamed Salah corner over the bar before a low drive from Trent Alexander-Arnold was superbly held by Madrid keeper Keylor Navas.

However, the 26th minute spelled trouble for Liverpool. That was when Salah needed initial treatment for an injury to his left shoulder after he had been dragged to the ground, by his right arm, by Sergio Ramos. The Egyptian returned to the action but went down again and left the pitch in tears, substituted by Adam Lallana.

Mistake...Loris Karius lets in Real's third

Minutes later Madrid were forced into a change of their own. Dani Carvajal was



Injury...Sergio Ramos (far left) brings down Mohamed Salah

injured in a counter-attack which went wrong and had to be replaced by Nacho.

Madrid now began to enjoy significant periods of possession with Liverpool standing off them, perhaps nervous of being caught out on the counter. One such spell ended with Karim Benzema popping the ball into the net from close range but, fortunately for Liverpool, Ronaldo had been fractionally offside with his initial headed goal attempt.

Nacho stormed in from the right to hit the side net and Toni Kroos skimmed a shot narrowly wide on the left before a half-time whistle which could not have come soon enough for Liverpool to rethink, reorganise and regroup.

But the danger signs were there for anyone who wanted to see them. Madrid had dropped into a pitch-wide pattern and shape while Liverpool, even before Salah's departure, looked notably shapeless. Tactically, Zidane had also established an ascendancy by giving Isco licence to skip disturbingly between the Liverpool lines.

Whatever advice Liverpool's players received from manager Jurgen Klopp at the break did nothing to persuade them to refocus. They carelessly conceded possession in front of their own penalty box two minutes after the restart and Isco hit the bar. Worse followed in the 51st minute when Karius saw his throw-out ricochet off the extended leg of Benzema and pop back into the net.

Madrid's celebrations lasted only four minutes before Sadio Mane equalised from close range after forcing a corner. But that was the last sight of Liverpool as an effective attacking force.

> What was there left for Zidane – a man who has won everything, first as a player and then as coach?

Madrid returned to the attack with devastating effect. Isco had a shot saved for a corner by Karius and was then surprisingly substituted for what proved a masterstroke by Zidane. The newly arrived Bale almost immediately restored Madrid's lead by meeting Marcelo's left-wing cross with a sensational overhead bicycle kick.

Ronaldo should have increased the lead in the 72nd minute but, when clear through the middle, he hesitated just long enough so the recovering Van Dijk could stretch out a leg and deflect his shot for a corner. Not that it mattered. Bale struck again, decisively, in the 83rd minute. This time he drifted in from the right to strike a lofted drive that slipped through the hands of the hapless Karius.

Zidane knew it was time to go. Will Ronaldo, at 33, and 28-year-old Bale follow him out of the door this summer?

Keir Radnedge

WHAT THEY SAID

GARETH BALE *(Real Madrid)*
"On the biggest stage in world football to score a goal like that is a dream come true. I've never scored a bicycle-kick goal before and it's something I've always wanted. I saw Marcelo clipping the ball in at the right height and thought: 'Why not give it a go?' and it was great to see it flying in the back of the net.

"I was very disappointed at being a substitute. I felt I'd been playing well but I know, as a professional, that the team isn't about 11 players it's about the squad, and when you have a chance you have to try to make an impact so that's what I did.

"But I feel I need to be playing every week and if that's not the case here I'll sit down in the summer with my agent and reflect on things."

ZINEDINE ZIDANE *(Real Madrid coach)*
"There is no great secret to this success. It's the product of a lot of hard work and a lot of talent. This team are always hungry for more goals and more victories. This has brought us great successes with three wins in succession and nobody has done that."

JURGEN KLOPP *(Liverpool manager)*
"The Salah injury was a big moment in the game. That always sounds like being a bad loser but it was a harsh challenge because it was like wrestling a bit and it was bad luck that Mo fell on his shoulder.

"It's a really serious injury and the shock for the boys was obvious.

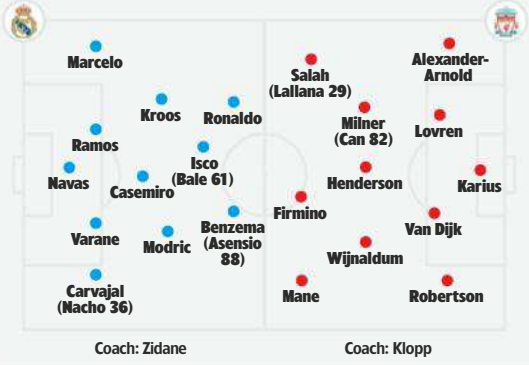
"I really feel for Karius. Nobody wants that. The mistakes were obvious. He knows it. I know it. You all know it.

"He has to deal with it. We have to deal with it. We will be with him."

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

REAL MADRID (Benzema 51, Bale 64, 83)	**3**
LIVERPOOL (Mane 55)	**1**

HT: 0-0. Att: 61,561. Ref: Mazis (Ser)



EASY PICKINGS FOR ATLETICO MADRID

Spanish side claim another European title

Atletico Madrid won their sixth European trophy far more easily than the two-goal scoreline suggested. And the underlying issue from the Europa League Final in Lyon was how the widening of football's class gap is not only about the "Big Five" and the rest but even within the TV-rich leagues of western Europe.

Last year, Paris Saint-Germain splashed €222million on Neymar who, apart from the financial flattery, was also misleadingly entranced by the idea that Qatari investment had raised PSG to the level of Barcelona and Real Madrid, Bayern Munich and Manchester City.

It took around half a season, even before PSG fell to Real Madrid in the Champions League, for Neymar to understand his misjudgement of the standard of Ligue 1. The evidence was laid out in stark clarity in the Europa Final between the second-best club in Spain and the fourth-best in France.

Once the first goal had gone in, it was game over. Atletico were a class better in every aspect – but there was more to it than that. Marseille were beaten partly because carelessness unmarked in the French league was punished ruthlessly. Clubs who command their own leagues do so not only through their own strength but also because of the weakness of the opposition – which can trick them into a false sense of superiority.

For French football pride there was consolation to be found only in the emergence of Antoine Griezmann as the two-goal man of the match. The 27-year-old France striker was a fan of Marseille as a boy but did not let that affect his commitment to Atletico's winning cause, even amid speculation that he will be off to Barcelona after the World Cup.

For Marseille, merely reaching the Final in the Parc Olympique Lyonnais had been an achievement in itself after 18 games in the competition. But Atletico were driven by higher-class ambitions. They had won the UEFA Cup – the Europa League's predecessor – in 2010 and 2012, but lost the Champions League Final to neighbours Real Madrid in 2014 and 2016. A further European fall at the last hurdle was not to be countenanced, and they duly won the number two competition for the third time in eight years.

Double...Antoine Griezmann scores his second goal

> "We made a defensive mistake which cost us a goal and, against a team like Atletico, you can't afford to do that. Atletico know these sort of matches, they play the Champions League regularly"
>
> **Marseille coach Rudi Garcia**

Griezmann's double strike and a late third from captain Gabi delivered for Atletico – who were brilliantly efficient rather than brilliant – making it a ninth win for a Spanish club in 15 seasons. Marseille, by contrast, ended up with a French record of four defeats in European Finals but were probably grateful at escaping so lightly.

Not that Marseille were entirely without opportunities to make a decent contest of it after they kicked off with a rugby-style downfield punt for touch. Twice they went close to savouring due reward, but first Valere Germain shot nervously high when clear through then Adil Rami was inches wide of Jan Oblak's left-hand post with a shot on the turn.

But Marseille were undone when midfielder Andre Anguissa lost control of a short clearance from keeper Steve Mandanda and Gabi pounced to deliver the pass for Griezmann to strike his fifth goal in eight Europa League games. He became the third Frenchman to score in the last three Europa League Finals, after Kevin Gameiro for Sevilla against Liverpool in 2016 and Paul Pogba for Manchester United against Ajax last year.

Marseille suffered a further blow after 32 minutes when skipper Dmitri Payet, a fitness doubt after missing the previous weekend's league match, aggravated a thigh problem in a midfield collision and had to be substituted. Distraught, Payet left the pitch in tears and with a consoling hug from French national team-mate Griezmann.

Whatever Griezmann's personal sympathies, they did not affect his own highly polished performance. Four minutes into the second half he arrowed on to a through pass from Koke and clipped an angled shot deftly over the abandoned Mandanda for Atletico's second goal.

Marseille fans, making up the vast majority of the crowd, did as best they could to encourage their team to find a path through the fast-covering Atletico defence and the smoke haze created by their own flares. But Atletico were so much the better team against Marseille's

Pressure... Marseille's Morgan Sanson (left)

Victorious...Atletico

collection of Premier League cast-offs it was almost embarrassing.

The French club surprised even themselves by almost snatching a goal out of nowhere 10 minutes from time. Newly arrived substitute Kostas Mitroglou headed Morgan Sanson's cross against Oblak's right-hand post but, as the ball ricocheted across the goal line, no one could supply a decisive touch.

Atletico responded in the 88th minute by showing how it should be done. Diego Costa and Koke cleared the way for Gabi to climax a hard-working captain's effort with a third goal. All that remained was for veteran Fernando Torres to appear as a late sub to join the celebrations.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone had been absent from the touchline, forced to hand technical-area duties to German Burgos after being sent to the stands in the semi-final against Arsenal. Perhaps that was why he was more relaxed than usual after the game as he praised his players' commitment, not only on the night but for all of his six years in charge, explaining: "This was not only about winning the Europa League, it was about also showing the value of hard work, a steady hand, continuity – values that are essential to be successful in life."

His opposite number, Rudi Garcia, had no excuses to offer. As he said: "At the start of the game we had the best goal opportunities but then we made a defensive mistake which cost us a goal and, against a team like Atletico, you can't afford to do that. Atletico know these sort of matches, they play the Champions League regularly so we should not be ashamed of losing."

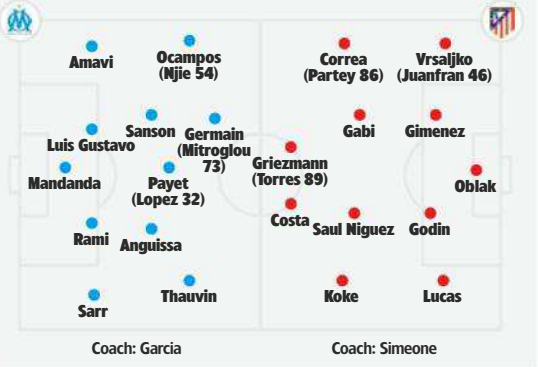
Ashamed, no; realistic, yes. The best Ligue 1 has to offer is significantly off the pace at elite level and no amount of money will put that right. Neymar, at Paris Saint-Germain for better or worse, also apparently understands that now himself.

Keir Radnedge

EUROPA LEAGUE FINAL

ATLETICO MADRID (Griezmann 21, 49, Gabi 89)	**3**
MARSEILLE	**0**

HT:1-0. Att: 55,768. Ref: Kuipers (Hol)



City stroll to the title

Champions reach 100-point mark

There are two ways in which to assess Manchester City's 2018 Premier League triumph. One is to marvel at the wonderful football played by Pep Guardiola's side; the other is to lament the lack of a title race created by their sheer dominance.

City were streets ahead of everybody else. They finished on 100 points, 19 ahead of second-placed Manchester United, having scored 106 goals. They remained unbeaten in the league until mid-January and could have confirmed the title in early April at home to rivals United, only to suffer a shock home defeat. Instead, their title was confirmed a week later when United surprisingly lost to West Bromwich Albion.

City spent heavily on defenders last summer, but it was the team's attacking play that earned widespread praise.

The introduction of the ball-playing keeper Ederson added a new dimension to their game, while Kyle Walker and Danilo gave them extra attacking impetus on the flanks. Ilkay Gundogan returned from serious injury to support Fernandinho in central midfield, while Kevin De Bruyne and David Silva dovetailed as joint playmakers, and new signing Bernardo Silva chipped in when called upon. They created the multiple chances as the goals were shared out around attackers Sergio Aguero (21) Raheem Sterling (18), Gabriel Jesus (13) and Leroy Sane (10).

City were challenged without ever being threatened by United, who ended Jose Mourinho's second season at Old Trafford trophyless, amid talk of tensions between the manager and record signing Paul Pogba.

Tottenham Hotspur continued to make progress under Mauricio Pochettino, beating Real Madrid in the Champions League group stage and overcoming a potentially tricky transitional season at Wembley.

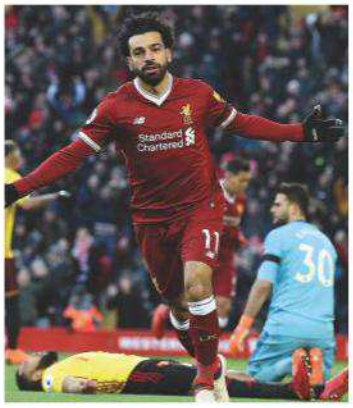
Liverpool, driven by the goals of Mohamed Salah and having overcome the sale of Phillipe Coutinho to Barcelona in January, eventually held off Chelsea for fourth place.

Defending champions Chelsea never looked like retaining their title after a summer of frustrating recruitments and tensions between boss Antonio Conte and the club's hierarchy. Arsenal again slipped out of the Champions League places, with Arsene Wenger finally ousted after 22 years.

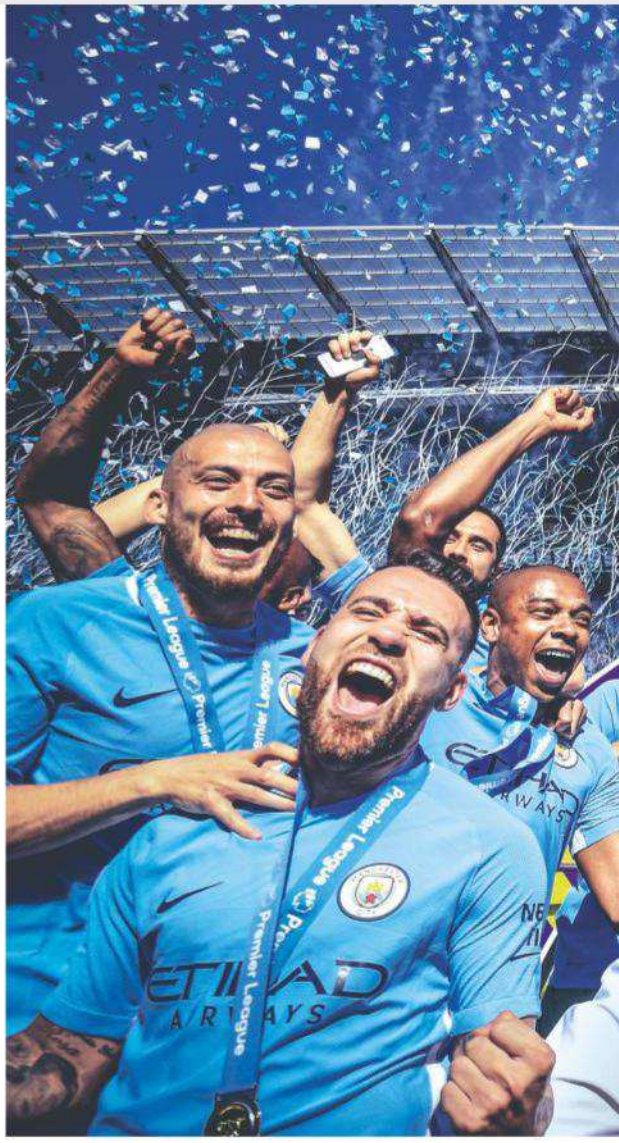
The financial gap between the top six and the rest made the achievement of Sean Dyche's Burnley all the more remarkable. Dyche took them to seventh place and into Europe for the first time in more than 50 years.

An indicator of the levelling off in quality among the rest of the league was the success of all three promoted sides in staying up. Brighton & Hove Albion spent £80million net on new players but were well-marshalled by Chris Hughton, while Rafa Benitez made impressive use of scarce resources at Newcastle United. Huddersfield Town's achievement was perhaps the greatest of the three, with David Wagner moulding a Championship side into a fiercely competitive unit.

While the three promoted teams kept their bosses, nine clubs made managerial changes during the season, with West Brom changing twice. The high financial



Driving force...Liverpool's Mohamed Salah



Too good...City were far and away the best side in the Premier League

THE BREAKDOWN

TEAM OF THE SEASON

THE CUP FINAL
Chelsea beat Manchester United, with Eden Hazard winning and then scoring a penalty for the only goal of the game. The match and score were a repeat of the first FA Cup Final played at the new Wembley.

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS
Manchester City, Manchester United, Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur all qualified for the group stage of the Champions League. Chelsea and Arsenal go into the Europa League group stage, with Burnley starting in the qualifiers.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED TEAMS
Swansea City went down with Stoke City and West Bromwich Albion. They are replaced next term by Championship winners Wolves and runners-up Cardiff City, plus Fulham who beat Aston Villa in the play-off Final.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
Despite being run close by Mohamed Salah of Liverpool, Kevin De Bruyne was the central creative figure for the champions Manchester City, providing more assists than any other player and weighing in with some thrilling goals.

City were streets ahead of everybody. They finished on 100 points, 19 ahead of second-placed Manchester United, scoring 106 goals

stakes forced the hand of many club owners but the changes prompted complaints that clubs were too reliant on the usual pool of senior British managers, with young coaches ignored in favour of the tried and tested.

There were some successes. Crystal Palace's survival despite a record poor start of seven successive defeats was a tonic for Roy Hodgson, who restored his reputation after England's failure at Euro 2016. David Moyes endured a difficult season at West Ham, where fans clashed with the owners, but the one-time Manchester United boss kept them up and brought the best out of maverick Marko Arnautovic.

But there were also some big-name failures. West Brom went from bad to worse under Alan Pardew, while Sam Allardyce stopped the rot at Everton but was sacked at the season's end amid unrest among the fans at his style of play.

The changes were not restricted to British managers – Marco Silva left Watford and eventually was hired by Everton as Allardyce's replacement, while Mauricio Pellegrino was fired by Southampton, who looked at one point as if their transfer strategy would finally undermine them.

Pellegrino's replacement, Mark Hughes, almost managed to relegate two sides, Stoke City and Southampton, but his new club rallied and sent Swansea down with Stoke and West Brom

They are replaced by Wolverhampton Wanderers, Cardiff City – with a record eighth promotion for Neil Warnock – and Fulham, whose defeat of Aston Villa in the play-off Final left the Midlands club heavily exposed financially. WS

Loyalty...Sean Dyche

COACH OF THE SEASON
Sean Dyche continues to perform wonders with Burnley, with the team punching above their weight and finishing seventh to qualify for Europe, rewarding the club for sticking with him after being relegated to the Championship in 2015.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Liverpool-born teenager Trent Alexander-Arnold began the season as a promising reserve with his local side and ended the campaign as a starter in the Champions League Final, with a senior England cap and a place in the World Cup squad.

Farewell...Arsene Wenger left Arsenal

Normal service is resumed

PSG dominate and win the treble

After last season's thrilling run to the title from Leonardo Jardim's Monaco, it was business as usual in Ligue 1.

Unai Emery's Paris Saint-Germain reasserted their domestic dominance and cruised to a fifth league title in six years. The team's 93 points from their 38 games gave them an impressive 13-point lead over second-placed Monaco – and the capital club's winning margin could have been even more emphatic had it not been for a so-so run-in once the trophy had been claimed in mid-April. PSG dropped nine points in their last four games to end all hopes of breaking the 100-point barrier.

Should Emery feel bitter at the club refusing to renew the two-year deal he signed back in June 2016, leaving him free to join Arsenal? Possibly. PSG also won the League Cup, beating Monaco 3-0 in April, and then bagged the French Cup with a 2-0 win over third-tier minnows Les Herbiers in early May.

Yet despite adding a domestic treble to the two cups he won last season, it was no secret that PSG's ultra-ambitious Qatari owners brought Emery in with a specific brief of delivering European success. Once his side had bowed out of the Champions League to Real Madrid, the Spaniard's position looked decidedly shaky. So it was no surprise when he announced his departure on April 27, with former Borussia Dortmund boss Thomas Tuchel the latest man charged with producing a continental trophy.

It would have been hard for Monaco to emulate the exploits of last term after losing the backbone of their title-winning side before the latest campaign had even begun. Their league form was probably as good as they could have hoped for, but the League Cup thumping by PSG will have hurt, as will a timid group-stage exit in the Champions League without winning a single game.

Once again, 32-year-old Colombian striker Radamel Falcao caught the eye, chipping in with 18 league goals. But Monaco's star of the season was surely Portuguese midfielder Rony Lopes. The 22-year-old ex-Manchester City man finally came of age and his 15-goal league haul was an impressive return.

Lyon grabbed the third Champions League slot, pipping Marseille by a point. Coach Bruno Genesio had to cope with losing Alexandre Lacazette to Arsenal, but he came up with an impressive replacement in the Spanish-born Dominican striker Mariano.

Signed from Real Madrid, he was one of an attacking quartet – alongside Bertrand Traore, Memphis Depay and Nabil Fekir – which notched 68 goals in the league. However, as is so often the case with OL, they face the prospect of losing a star player in the close season and this summer the big attraction is captain and French World Cup selection Nabil Fekir.

Rudi Garcia's Marseille finished in

Impressive...Monaco's Rony Lopes (right)

THE BREAKDOWN

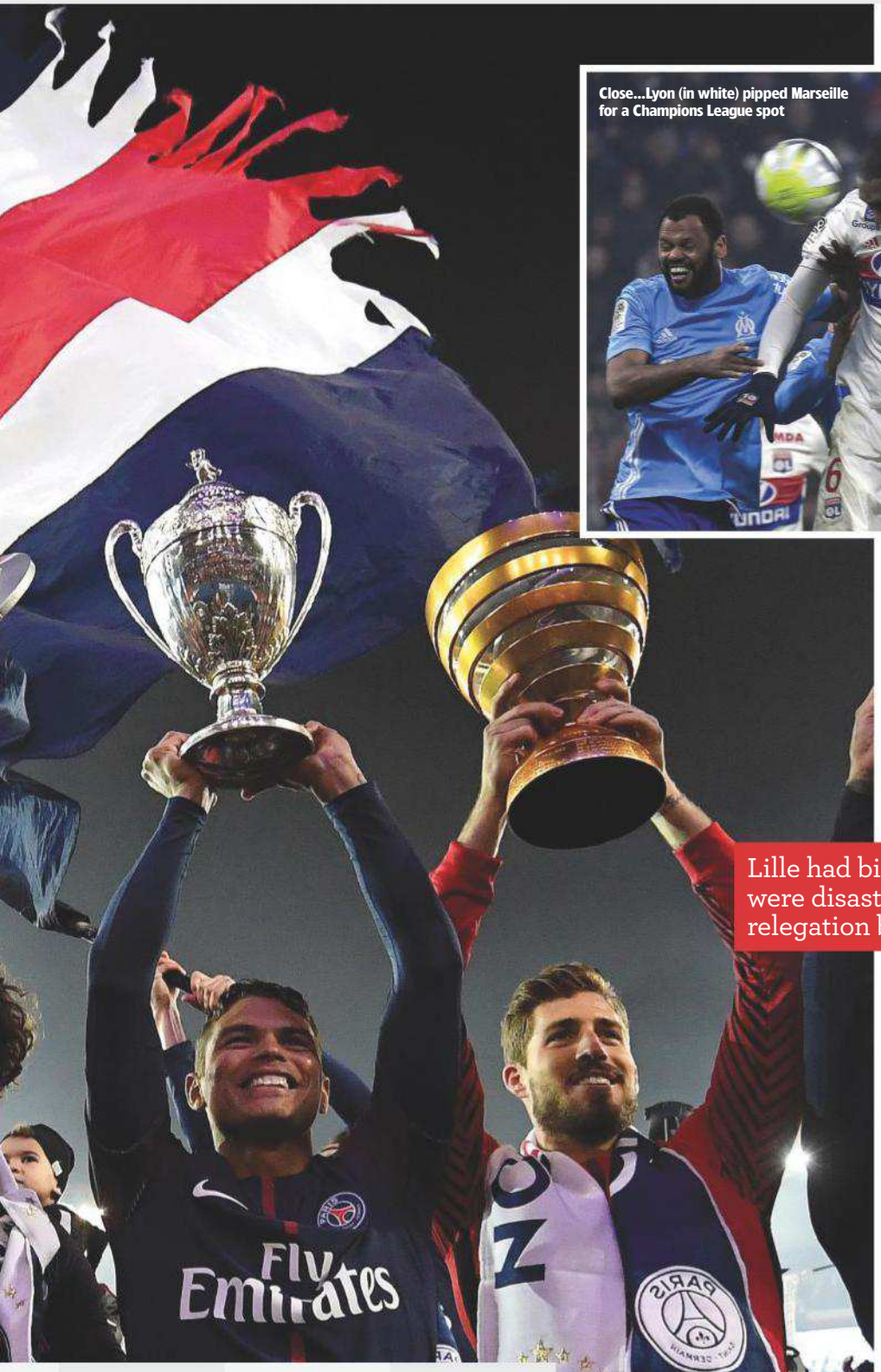
TEAM OF THE SEASON

THE CUP FINAL
PSG may have won, but all the plaudits went to beaten finalists Les Herbiers. Despite a gritty performance the third-tier team eventually lost 2-0 – and three days later they were relegated to the Championnat National.

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS
PSG and Monaco will start in the group stage of the Champions League, as do third-place Lyon following a UEFA rule change. Marseille and Rennes are in the Europa League group stage, while Bordeaux will play in the qualifiers.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED TEAMS
Metz were bottom of Ligue 1 for most of the season and were duly bounced out of the league with Troyes, while Reims and Nimes were automatically promoted. Toulouse maintained their top-flight status by beating AC Ajaccio in a play-off.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
In August, PSG spent a world-record €222m on Neymar from Barcelona, and despite talk of spats with team-mates he delivered, with 19 goals and 13 assists in 20 league games – before a fractured metatarsal in February ended his domestic season.



Back in charge...Paris Saint-Germain dominated

Close...Lyon (in white) pipped Marseille for a Champions League spot

fourth place, ensuring qualification for next season's Europa League – a competition they came within a hair's breadth of winning after an impressive run saw them make it to the Final in Lyon. On the night, Atletico Madrid were far too strong for OM and ran out deserved 3-0 winners, but Garcia will be encouraged by his side's overall campaign, in which Florian Thauvin and Dimitri Payet shone.

After a takeover by businessman Gerard Lopez at the start of 2017, Lille had sky-high expectations for the campaign and spent a whopping €57million to bring in a number of players, including Brazilian trio Thiago Mendes, Thiago Maia and Luiz Araujo.

> Lille had big expectations but results were disastrous and they escaped relegation by the skin of their teeth

But results were nothing short of disastrous and they escaped relegation by the skin of their teeth, finishing just one spot above the drop zone in 17th place. After the controversial Argentinian coach Marcelo Bielsa was relieved of his duties in December, former Saint-Etienne boss Stephane Galthier was hired by *Les Dogues* and he'll need to do a whole lot better next term if he doesn't want to suffer the same fate as his predecessor.

Toulouse once again endured a difficult campaign and found themselves taking on AC Ajaccio in a two-legged play-off to retain their place in Ligue 1.

The Corsican outfit finished third in Ligue 2, behind champions Reims and Nimes, both of whom are automatically promoted. But following crowd trouble at their own ground in a match against Le Havre, Ajaccio were forced to play the "home" first leg of the play-off behind closed doors in Montpellier and went down 3-0. They then lost the second game 1-0 in Toulouse and therefore remain in the second tier. WS

COACH OF THE SEASON
Unai Emery won trophies and Rudi Garcia transformed Marseille, but Sabri Lamouchi is an unsung hero. He arrived at 14th-place Rennes from Qatar in November and led the side to a highly creditable fifth-place finish and Europa League qualification.

Unsung...Lamouchi

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
It wasn't a big year for newbies, but after an €8million move from Real Madrid last June, Dominican striker Mariano Diaz made a huge impact as he notched 18 league goals for Lyon. The 24-year-old is now looking like a real bargain.

Six in a row and the end of an era

Bayern triumph as Hamburg fall from grace

Even though his Bayern Munich side spluttered to a halt in the final few weeks of the season – unlucky to lose to Real Madrid in the Champions League semi-finals and unexpectedly beaten by Eintracht Frankfurt in the German Cup Final – don't let it be said that veteran coach Jupp Heynckes did a sub-standard job in his seven-month stint as Allianz-Arena caretaker.

When Heynckes, who recently turned 73, was lured out of retirement in October to take over from the sacked Carlo Ancelotti, the air was thick with red-alert warnings. There were a number of key players – among them Thomas Muller, Robert Lewandowski, Arjen Robben and Franck Ribery – in open revolt against Ancelotti. The team had a marked lack of shape, sharpness and focus. They suffered a humiliating 3-0 loss to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League group phase. Their off-the-pace Bundesliga campaign saw them five points adrift of early leaders Borussia Dortmund.

It was most definitely a shambles. But within three weeks of Heynckes' arrival, Bayern were top of the domestic pile. By the winter break they had stretched their advantage at the head of the table to nine points, and they clinched a sixth straight Bundesliga title in early April, five rounds from the end of the season.

Heynckes was always the obvious choice as the Allianz-Arena emergency doctor. He had the pedigree with 28 seasons of top-flight coaching, an intimate knowledge of the club and, most important of all, still has that uncanny ability to handle star names, effortlessly treading the line between unquestioned authority and an almost paternalistic relationship with his players

Cup winner...Ante Rebic of Eintracht Frankfurt

Ancelotti is a fine coach – his three Champions League titles are testament to that – yet even he would have to admit that Heynckes produced a much tastier dish with the same ingredients. With the latter at the helm it was an entirely different Bayern. More unified, structured and altogether hungrier.

Switching the athletic and powerful Javi Martinez from a central-defensive slot to an engine-room enforcer brief was a masterstroke, as was Heynckes' choice of Colombian loanee James Rodriguez as the team's creative hub.

But Heynckes was the not the only Bundesliga boss to mightily impress. Still only 30, Julian Nagelsmann lifted Hoffenheim to the hitherto unscaled heights of third place, Augsburg's Manuel Baum exceeded all expectations by comfortably securing survival on a shoestring, and rookie Florian Kohfeldt steered Werder Bremen from second-bottom to a solid 12th-place finish.

Only handed the Stuttgart first-team

THE BREAKDOWN

TEAM OF THE SEASON

THE CUP FINAL
Eintracht Frankfurt claimed their first item of silverware in 30 years, beating Bayern Munich 3-1 in Berlin. Eintracht's counter-attacking strategy worked a treat, with two-goal Croat striker Ante Rebic causing no end of problems.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED
Cologne went down with Hamburg, who ended their 56-year residency in the top flight. Fortuna Dusseldorf, who have not featured among the elite since 1997, were second-tier champions, with Nuremberg finishing runners-up.

Back...Fortuna Dusseldorf

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS
Bayern Munich, Schalke, Hoffenheim and Borussia Dortmund enter the group phase of the Champions League. Bayer Leverkusen and RB Leipzig, fifth and sixth in the Bundesliga, have a Europa League rendezvous, as do Eintracht Frankfurt.

Stopgap...Jupp Heynckes has stepped down

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski was unstoppable, rattling in 29 goals to claim the Bundesliga top marksman award – his third in total. Rumoured to want a move to Real Madrid, he was arguably the only one not to buy into the vibe under Jupp Heynckes.

COACH OF THE SEASON
In his first term as a Bundesliga boss, Domenico Tedesco hit all the right notes, assembling a Schalke team worth far more than the sum of its parts. His three commandments were teamwork, organisation and controlled aggression.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Eintracht Frankfurt's attacking midfielder Marius Wolf was playing in the fourth tier with Hanover's reserve side only 18 months ago. He came through the 1860 Munich youth ranks and will be featuring for Borussia Dortmund next season.

reins in January following the shock dismissal of Hannes Wolf, Tayfun Korkut was the comeback coach of the season. After underwhelming spells in charge of Hanover, Kaiserslautern and Bayer Leverkusen, he was widely thought to be damaged goods. However, Stuttgart director of sport Michael Reschke thought differently – and Tayfun delivered in spades, with only one defeat and nine wins in 14 games, including a 4-1 victory at Bayern Munich.

Another in-vogue coach was Eintracht Frankfurt's Niko Kovac, who will soon be easing himself into the Bayern Munich hot seat, having beaten his employers-to-be 3-1 in the German Cup Final.

At a club infamous for its instability, Schalke boss Domenico Tedesco enjoyed a remarkable inaugural season in the elite, sealing the club's first Champions League spot since 2014-15, although not surprisingly for someone with Italian roots his football philosophy has much in common with the safety-first tactics of Serie A in the 1960s and '70s.

Scraping into the fourth and final Champions League berth on goal difference, the other Ruhr powerhouse Borussia Dortmund endured a torrid season. Chronically inconsistent, sloppy at the back and inclined to fold with the heat on, they were frequently not at the races and by December, just a few months into his reign, Dutch coach Peter Bosz was replaced by Peter Stoger, who had been fired by rock-bottom Cologne a few days earlier. The Austrian would steady the Dortmund ship to a degree, although his side were drubbed 6-0 at Bayern and suffered a 2-0 Ruhr derby reverse at Schalke.

Runners-up in 2016-17, RB Leipzig had their eye on a second consecutive Champions League campaign, but ultimately came up two places shy. Much of the damage was done in the last few weeks of the campaign, with heavy defeats at the hands of Leverkusen, Hoffenheim, Mainz and Hertha Berlin. Feeling let down by his side, RB coach Ralph Hasenhuttl let rip, saying: "I've never seen such an attitude from a team, with players giving up." Somewhat inevitably, Hasenhuttl and RB have since parted company.

Proof that tradition, prestige and a considerable fan base do not guarantee sporting success, Cologne and Hamburg, each a founding member of the Bundesliga, had that sinking feeling.

Only recording five wins all season and conceding no fewer than 70 goals, Cologne were bottom for almost the entire campaign, while Hamburg were nearly as abject, losing 19 of their 34 fixtures and scoring just 29 times.

Demotion was an especially bitter pill for Hamburg to swallow as they had been the only team to have featured in every Bundesliga season since its inception in 1963. WS

Seven in a row for Juventus

But they are pushed all the way by Napoli

First things first. The emphatic and determined manner in which Juventus picked up a seventh consecutive title, a 34th in all, leaves little doubt that they are the strongest team in the land.

But they were made to battle all the way by a rampant Napoli side who, on the morning of April 23, with only four games to play, trailed Massimiliano Allegri's side by just one point. The previous evening, Napoli had pulled off one of the results of the season, beating Juventus 1-0 in Turin, with a 90th-minute goal from Senegalese central defender Kalidou Koulibaly.

In the end, that was as close as Napoli got. The season-long duel was effectively over the following weekend when Juve were at Internazionale and Napoli were away to Fiorentina.

Playing on Saturday evening, Juve were in trouble with three minutes to go, losing 1-0 to a 10-man Inter. But, remarkably, they won with two late goals – which owed much to Inter having to play with a man less following the 18th-minute sending-off of Matias Vecino.

Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri later admitted that the negative psychological impact of that late Juventus comeback weighed heavily against his side when they lined up in Florence the following day. Certainly, the game saw one of Napoli's worst results of the season, losing 3-0 and having Koulibaly dismissed after only six minutes.

The following weekend Juventus beat Bologna 3-1 the day before a nervous Napoli were held 2-2 at home by Torino.

Six points clear with just two games to play, Juventus could even have lost their last two games, away to Roma and at home to Verona, and still won the title. With both clubs tied on points, the title would have been decided, first on the head-to-head count and, failing that, on goal difference.

Given that Juventus beat Napoli 1-0 in Naples last December while Napoli returned the favour beating Juve 1-0 in Turin in April, the title would come down to goal difference, and Juve were fully 16

Seventh heaven...Juventus are crowned Serie A champions once again

Finale...Inter (in stripes) get the better of Lazio

THE BREAKDOWN

TEAM OF THE SEASON

THE CUP FINAL
After a scoreless first half, Juventus were much too strong for Milan who conceded three goals from corner kicks in a 4-0 defeat. Two of Juve's goals, however, came directly from errors by Milan goalkeeper Gigio Donnarumma.

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS
Back after a six-year absence, Internazionale join Juventus, Napoli and Roma in the group stage of the Champions League. Lazio and Milan are in the group stage of the Europa League, while Atalanta start in the second qualifying round.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED TEAMS
Crotone, Verona and Benevento all drop out of the top flight. Serie B champions Empoli and runners-up Parma replace them, along with the winners of the play-off between third-place Frosinone and Palermo, who finished fourth.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
Lazio's 23-year-old attacking midfielder, Sergej Milinkovic-Savic seems destined to be one of this summer's big transfers. A key factor in an excellent Lazio season, the Serb combines imposing physical presence with an eye for goal.

goals clear of Napoli. In the end, a 0-0 draw away to Roma gave Juventus their fourth consecutive league and cup double, having beaten Milan 4-0 in the Italian Cup Final at the same stadium six days earlier.

Although some fans and commentators complained about refereeing decisions in that Inter versus Juve game, and the failure to ensure that both Juventus and Napoli kicked off at the same time on the same day during the run-in, former Juventus great Marco Tardelli, offered a more telling explanation for Juve's title win, explaining to *La Gazzetta dello Sport*: "Mental strength and being accustomed to winning certain titles – Juventus have much more of that and it told. After Napoli's win in Turin and again against Inter, Juve's back was to the wall but they still pulled it off."

Tardelli argued that, for Juventus, the most difficult moment in the season came, not with that defeat by Napoli but rather with their dramatic, last-minute Champions League quarter-final loss to Real Madrid

"That [defeat by Real] looked like the end of a whole cycle and one which had come right on the brink of pulling off a huge result," said Tardelli.

"To get your act together after that required huge team determination not to mention the motivational work of a good coach."

> "Mental strength and being accustomed to winning certain titles – Juventus have much more of that and it told"
> Marco Tardelli

The last-day excitement in Serie A came as Lazio entertained Inter at the Olimpico in a do-or-die decider for a Champions League spot. In a dramatic game, Inter gave one of their best performances of the season to come from 2-1 down to win 3-2.

It was not the first time during the season that an excellent Lazio side had come a cropper at the very last fence, just when they appeared to have landed their Champions League place. But – and, again, not for the first time – it has to be acknowledged that the experienced Luciano Spalletti did a splendid job with Inter, in what is not always the most straightforward club job in the land.

With an eye on next season, Inter are sure to be one of the talking points this summer, as will the appointment of Carlo Ancelotti as coach to Napoli.

Even without the World Cup, Italian fans will have plenty to talk about through the long, hot summer. WS

Key...Milinkovic-Savic

COACH OF THE SEASON
In taking Roma to the semi-final of the Champions League, Eusebio Di Francesco did more in his first season than could reasonably have been expected. And third place in Serie A earned the club another place at Europe's top table next season.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Roma's Cengiz Under scored seven Serie A goals, plus one in the Champions League, in his first season in Italy and looks to have a bright future. Bought to replace Mohamed Salah, coach Di Francesco has likened him to former club great, Vincenzo Montella.

Crushing...Napoli (in sky blue) lose at Fiorentina

Simply the best in Spain again

Barcelona win the domestic double

"We were stunned," said Levante winger Jose Luis Morales. They all were; not just at the Ciutat de Valencia but right the way across Spain. As the news came in, people started tuning in to a match that many hadn't planned to watch.

It wasn't supposed to happen like this. It was the penultimate weekend of the campaign and Levante were on course to do something that no one else had managed all season long in the league, going back 36 games and beyond.

It was early in the second half and Levante were leading Barcelona 5-1.

Nine times Barcelona had trailed last term before coming back in all of them. And it looked as though it might be 10 when they scored three times to make it 5-4 with 20 minutes still to play. "That's when we started crapping ourselves," Morales laughed afterwards. "All sorts of thoughts go through your head."

But Barca failed to score again and lost for the first time in La Liga. On course for the first unbeaten league title since 1932 – when the season was only 18 games long – the dream of finishing as "invincibles" was no more.

They were, though, champions once again. They had also won the league without losing a match as this defeat was after they had taken the title.

It hurt, not least because as Real Madrid prepared for the Champions League Final the talk was of how domestic success would be eclipsed by Europe. Debates raged about what was better: a double or a European Cup. Truth be told, it wasn't that much of a debate. Yes, the league might matter more, and might be a more accurate gauge of who is actually the best team, but nothing quite matches the impact of the European Cup. In Europe, Barcelona had collapsed against Roma, a moment that Sergio Busquets admitted was a "thorn in our side".

And so, a domestic double felt a little underwhelming – which says something about the way things have gone with the big two in Spain. An unbeaten season would have infused it with extra importance, but it was not to be.

But this was still big – or should have been. When Barcelona beat Deportivo La Coruna with a Lionel Messi hat-trick three weeks from the end of the season, it made them the earliest title winners in 20 years. Ultimately, they finished 14 points ahead of runners-up Atletico Madrid and 17 ahead of Real Madrid.

Valencia had competed with them and were considered candidates during the first half of the season before falling

Shock...Barcelona lose for the first time

THE BREAKDOWN

TEAM OF THE SEASON

THE CUP FINAL
A fourth straight Copa del Rey was simple enough in the end. Although they lost a first leg against Espanyol in the quarter-finals, Barcelona made their way to the Final, where they beat Sevilla 5-0 at the Wanda Metropolitano in Madrid.

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS
The top four in La Liga – Barcelona, Atletico, Real Madrid and Valencia – go into the Champions League group stage. Villarreal and Real Betis, who finished fifth and sixth, are in the Europa League group stage, while Sevilla start in the qualifying rounds.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED TEAMS
Malaga, Las Palmas and Deportivo La Coruna went down. They were replaced by second-tier champions Rayo Vallecano and runners-up Huesca, who will play in the top flight for the first time. The third spot will go to Numancia or Valladolid.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
What more is there to say about Lionel Messi? It should come as no surprise that the only Liga game Barcelona lost was when he was absent. And if he quits Argentina as has been suggested, he'll benefit from having international weeks off next term.

away. At that point, Atletico emerged as contenders, but they were beaten 1-0 at the Camp Nou thanks to a Messi free-kick. Madrid, four points adrift after just three games, were never in it. Barca won seven out of their first seven and reached week 11 with 10 wins.

Victory made Barcelona champions for the seventh time in 10 years. But while winning the league is just what Barca do, it was not what they were expected to do this year.

If there is a phrase that seemed set to mark this season it came from Gerard Pique back in August. For the first time, he admitted he felt "inferior" to Madrid. Neymar had gone, Barcelona had lost 5-1 on aggregate in the Spanish Super Cup and a crisis loomed. They didn't manage to sign Philippe Coutinho – he eventually arrived in the winter – and while they did get Ousmane Dembele, they paid over the odds for him and he had suffered injury early on at Getafe.

But for all that, there they were at the end, champions again and by a very, very long way. They had built a solid side, organised and committed, and then they had Messi, the man who stood well above the rest in Spain.

Challengers...Atletico (in stripes) and Valencia

"His decisiveness in this competition is clear," said Atletico boss Diego Simeone of Messi. He provided more goals and more assists than anyone else; he pulled them back when they trailed, most notably at Sevilla and then again, already champions, in the *clasico*.

Not that it was only Messi. For the first half of the season, Marc-Andre Ter Stegen and Samuel Umtiti impressed enormously. Jordi Alba became Messi's partner, whizzing up the left, always looking for the pass and the return, always available. Ivan Rakitic was everyone's partner, always offering what his team needed. Paulinho scored more times than any other midfielder. Luis Suarez reached 25 goals.

At times there were doubts about their play, but it didn't take long for there to be no doubts about the destination of the league – which perhaps didn't help by the time the final weeks rolled round.

"When you win the league, it looks simple," said coach Ernesto Valverde, but he knew that it was not. He talked about the "depressive state" that sometimes surrounds the club, yet they ended the season on an open-topped bus.

And as Messi explained: "We were superior, much better than the rest." WS

COACH OF THE SEASON
Quique Setien led Real Betis to sixth spot in La Liga, earning a place in Europe next season and turning the team into one of Spain's most watchable. Only Barcelona, Real Madrid and Valencia bettered their 60 goals – but they did concede 61.

Vital goal...Fabian

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
On loan at second-tier Elche the season before, Fabian finally established himself in the Real Betis side. A central midfielder, he only scored three times in La Liga – but one of those was the goal that beat Malaga to secure a place in the Europa League.

Superior...Lionel Messi was the star of the show

Glenn Moore

Lyon rule Europe again

OL triumph as France gets set for World Cup

The big beasts are stirring. Manchester United have formed a women's team to follow Manchester City; Chelsea invested to overtake Arsenal; Juventus won a debut title; Barcelona and Bayern Munich raised their standards. These grand clubs will soon provide Europe's best.

But, for now, Lyon reign supreme. The French club won a record fifth Champions League crown in Kiev – their third in succession – blowing away a Wolfsburg side that ran out of puff.

French champions for the 12th successive year, the achievements of OL's multi-national squad are testament to the desire of club president Jean-Michel Aulas to create a team to raise the women's game to new levels.

Lyon won 4-1 after two hours' football in Ukraine, but the key action was condensed into an extraordinary 10-minute period of extra-time, which produced four goals, a red card and a wild swing in fortune.

Though Lyon were largely dominant in the Valeriy Lobanovskyi Dynamo Stadium, Wolfsburg scored first, three minutes into the extra half-hour. But their lead lasted only four minutes, during which time they were reduced to 10 players. Lyon reacted ruthlessly to Alexandra Popp's dismissal and crushed the Bundesliga champions.

Lyon's Amandine Henry, who was named Women of the Match, said: "I've never played in a match like this with so many twists and surprises. It hasn't sunk in, yet, that we've gone down in history."

Lyon should have opened the scoring in the 69th minute when Henry's flick from a Eugenie Le Sommer header beat Wolfsburg keeper Almuth Schult, only for Noelle Maritz to hack clear. Television pictures indicated the ball had crossed the line but, unlike in the men's Final, there was no goal-line technology available, so officials waved play on.

Winner...Brazil's Thais (in blue)

Off...Wolfsburg's Alexandra Popp is dismissed

"When the goal was disallowed we thought it might not be our day," said Lyon coach Reynald Pedros. "Then we conceded. But the players put that aside – so I didn't doubt for very long."

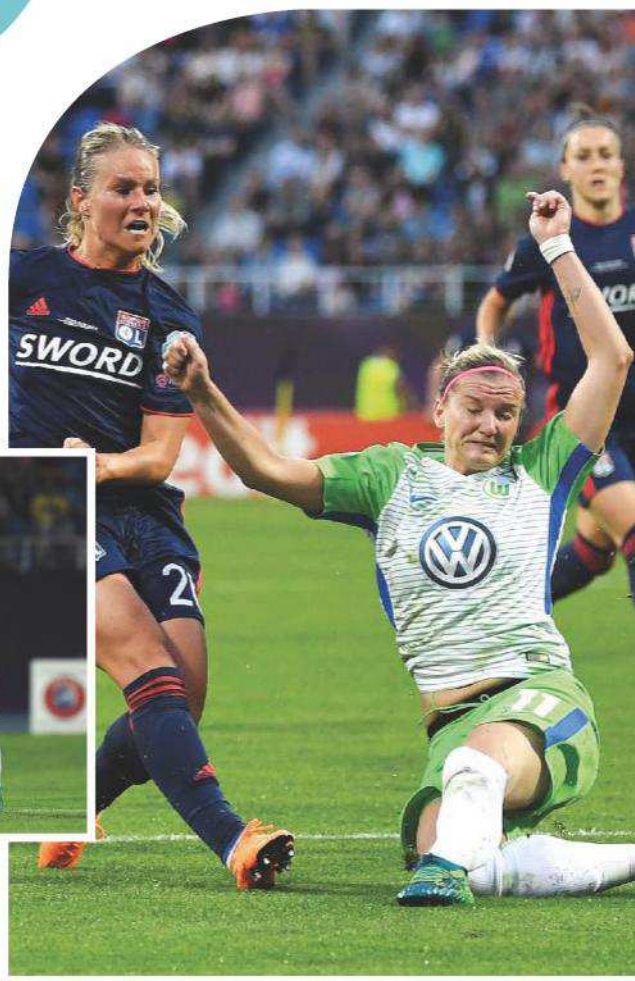
Wolfsburg had their own complaint early on, after Lyon keeper Sarah Bouhaddi clattered into Sara Bjork Gunnarsdottir as they went for a high ball in the penalty area in the ninth minute, but no foul was given.

There were few other incidents in the opening 90 minutes, but the game exploded into life in extra-time.

Pernille Harder, released by Schult's throw to counter-attack, gave Wolfsburg the lead when a speculative shot deflected off the inattentive Wendie Renard to leave Bouhaddi wrong-footed.

Despite Bouhaddi now playing with a broken hand after crashing into team-mate Lucy Bronze, the Germans – with centre-half Nilla Fischer to the fore – looked as though they would be hard to break down. But then Popp, who had already been booked, flew into a rash challenge on Delphine Cascarino and received a second yellow card.

Popp had been influential, especially with Wolfsburg losing Caroline Graham Hansen and Gunnarsdottir to injury during normal time. Having played 120 minutes five days prior when winning the German Cup on penalties against Bayern Munich, they could ill-afford to be reduced to 10 and were still reeling when Henry ran onto Ada Hegerberg's flick to level within two minutes of Popp's exit.



Such is Lyon's strength-in-depth that US international Morgan Brian did not even make the bench – but Shanice Van de Sanden did, and the Dutchwoman made a dramatic impact. A minute after Henry's goal she broke down the right and squared for Le Sommer to score. Four minutes later her cross enabled Hegerberg to score a record 15th goal of this year's European campaign.

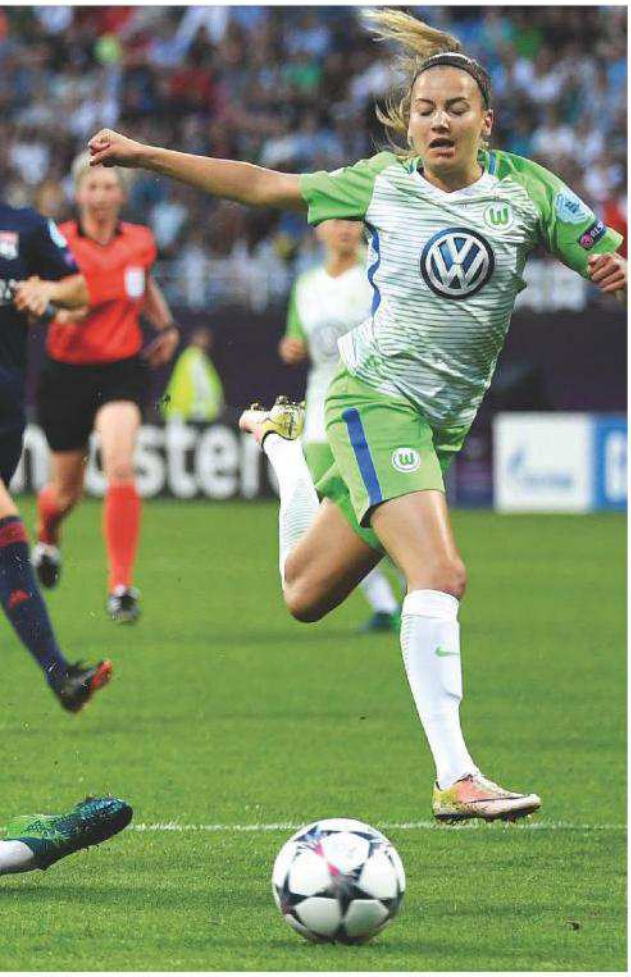
The contest was over but there was still time for Camille Abily, in the final season of a grand career, to make a farewell cameo, topping it with a well-taken goal from a Van de Sanden cross.

"When we went 1-0 up it was a great moment for us," said Stephan Lerch, the Wolfsburg coach. "But then the red card came immediately after. Lyon put on the pressure and started hurting us. We've had tough games in the last two weeks

WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

May 24, 2018 – Kiev

Lyon 4 (Henry 98, Le Sommer 99, Hegerberg 103, Abily 116)
Wolfsburg 1 (Harder 93)
(aet, 0-0 after 90 minutes)
Att: 14,237
Lyon: Bouhaddi; Bronze, M'Bock Bathy, Renard, Bacha (Cascarino, 65); Marozsan, Kumagi (Van de Sanden, 95), Henry, Majri; Hegerberg, Le Sommer (Abily, 99)
Wolfsburg: Schult; Blasse, Fischer, Goessling, Maritz; Graham Hansen (Wullaert, 45), Gunnarsdottir (Wedemeyer, 57), Popp, Dickenmann (Kerschowski, 89); Pajor, Harder
Ref: Adamkova (CzR)



Threat...Wolfsburg fail to stop Amandine Henry's shot

and it was just too much pressure.

"Yes, I am bitter, but I am so proud of the determination my team showed."

Between them the two teams have won seven of the last eight finals, with Frankfurt's 2015 victory being the exception. The big brands of European football may well be on the march, but the pace set by these two will still take some matching.

Meanwhile, the line-up for the 2019 World Cup in France is beginning to take shape. The Asian and South American championships doubled up as qualifying competitions and delivered seven finalists to join the hosts.

Both qualifying competitions were won by the holders, with Japan beating Australia 1-0 in Asia and Brazil winning their seventh Copa America Femenina in eight competitions, with beaten finalists Chile qualifying for their maiden finals.

South Korea were the victims of a lop-sided draw in the eight-team Asian Cup, being edged out by Japan and Australia despite drawing with both in the group stage. Compensation came with a 5-0 victory over Philippines in a play-off to secure a World Cup berth, along with beaten semi-finalists China and Thailand.

In those semis, Australia needed penalties to see off Thailand, but failed from the spot in the Final when Ayaka Yamashita saved from Elise Kellond-Knight. Kumi Yokoyama scored Japan's winner in the 84th minute. WS

Round-up

Joy...Chelsea and boss Emma Hayes (right)

DOUBLE FOR NEW MUM HAYES

Chelsea won the English double, beating Arsenal 3-1 in the Women's FA Cup then securing their second WSL title. In between, manager Emma Hayes gave birth to a boy.

In front of more then 45,000 at Wembley, Swiss striker Ramona Bachman scored twice. Holland international Vivianne Miedema then gave Arsenal some hope, before Fran Kirby sealed victory.

Five days after the Final, Kirby received the inaugural Football Writers' Association Women's Footballer of the Year award, having also won the player's union trophy.

Going up... West Ham

UNITED JOIN IN

Manchester United were granted a place in the second-tier Women's Championship for their newly revived women's team. West Ham were promoted two levels into an 11-team Women's Super League, while Leicester City, Sheffield United, Charlton Athletic and Lewes also go into the 12-team Championship. The main casualties were Sunderland, who drop from the second tier to the regional Women's National League.

JUVE START IN STYLE

Juventus marked their first season by winning the Italian league on penalties.

With Juve and Brescia finishing on 60 points, a play-off was required and after a goalless two hours, during which Barbara Bonansea hit the bar for Juventus, penalties ensued.

Each keeper saved once in the regulation 10, but in sudden death Juve's Lisa Boattin scored while Brescia's Federica Di Criscio missed.

Debut...Juve are off to a great start

MEXICAN CROWD SETS RECORD

A world-record crowd for a women's club match watched Tigres lift the Mexican clausura title, winning a penalty shoot-out at local rivals Monterrey after a drawn two-leg Final.

The gate of 51,211 capped a successful first year for the league which almost perversely refused to feature US-born players of Mexican heritage – which, combined with a strict focus on young players meant it began with few national-team players.

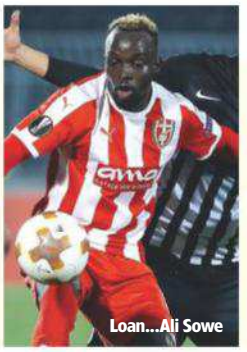
GERMANY PREPARED TO WAIT

Martina Voss-Tecklenburg, currently coaching Switzerland, will take over the German team at the completion of World Cup qualifying.

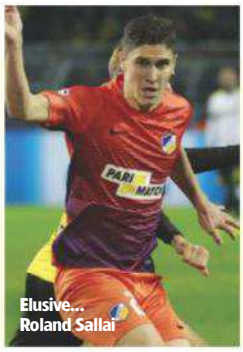
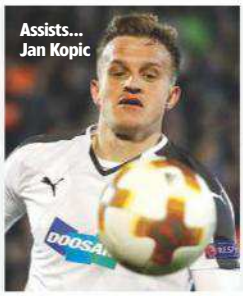
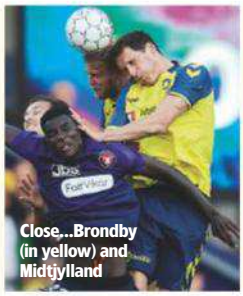
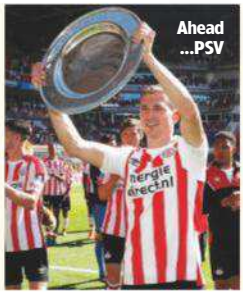
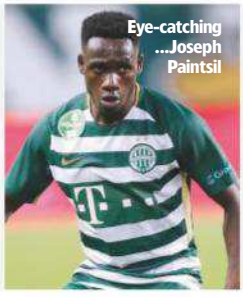
The 50-year-old played 125 times for Germany and coached Duisburg to the UEFA Women's Cup (the forerunner of the Champions League). Until her arrival, Horst Hrubesch will continue in the role. Hrubesch scored the winning goals for Germany in the men's 1980 European Championship.

Lined up... Martina Voss-Tecklenburg

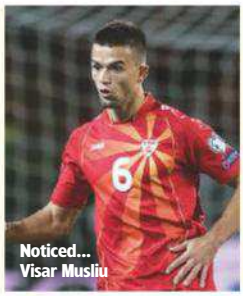
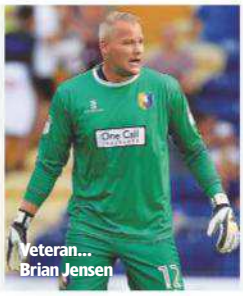
	HOW THE LEAGUE WAS WON	CUP WINNERS	WHO QUALIFIED FOR EUROPE
Albania SUPERLIGA *by John Holmesdale*	Skenderbeu picked up their eighth title, having led the league all season. But the celebrations were then overshadowed by a 10-year European competition ban for match fixing. A UEFA report claimed the club "has been fixing football matches like nobody has ever done before".	Despite all their off-field troubles, Skenderbeu made history on it as they completed their first-ever league-and-cup double. They beat Laci 1-0 in a closely fought Final, with Sabien Lilaj converting a 68th-minute penalty for the only goal of the game at the Elbasan Arena.	Champions Skenderbeu have appealed to CAS to overturn their ban, but it seems likely that runners-up Kukesi will take their place in the Champions League first qualifying round. Lufetari Gjirokaster and Laci will take the Europa League qualifying spots.
Austria BUNDESLIGA *by Brian Homewood*	Red Bull Salzburg won the title for a ninth time in the last 12 seasons and the fifth in a row. Sturm Graz briefly threatened to make a fight of it when they went top for two weeks in January but relinquished the lead with a defeat at Mattersburg and Salzburg never looked back.	Sturm Graz beat Red Bull Salzburg 1-0 after extra-time with a goal by Stefan Hierlander. There were eight yellow cards during the Final, two of which were shown to Salzburg's Andre Ramalho who was sent off in the second half for two bookable offences in quick succession.	Salzburg enter the third qualifying round of the Champions League, with Sturm Graz starting in the second qualifying round. In the Europa League, Rapid Vienna begin in the third qualifying round, with LASK Linz and Admira Wacker kicking off their campaigns in the previous round.
Belgium FIRST DIVISION A *by John Chapman*	At the end of the regular season, **Club Brugge** (▸) led Anderlecht by 12 points, but Ivan Leko's men got the jitters and lost more games in the play-offs than they had in the season proper. However, they held on from a rejuvenated Standard Liege to take the title in Leko's first season.	This year's Final was regarded as one of the worst in the competition's history. Standard Liege took the trophy for an eighth time with an extra-time goal against Racing Genk and the win kick-started their season; they reached the play-offs and eventually finished runners-up.	Club Brugge qualified for the Champions League group stage, with Standard Liege entering the third qualifying round. Third-placed Anderlecht enter the Europa League group stage. Fourth and fifth-placed teams Gent and Genk enter the third qualifying round.
Bosnia-Herzegovina PREMIER LEAGUE *by Sasa Ibrulj*	In a tight race, Zrinjski Mostar claimed their third championship in a row, and fourth in five years. The decisive game was at home to Zeljeznicar in March. With the visitors leading 3-0 and set to go five points clear, Zrinjski scored three in three minutes to grab an important draw.	Runners-up in the league championship, Zeljeznicar had to satisfy themselves with a record-breaking sixth Bosnian Cup. They beat Krupa 6-0 on aggregate at the end of the season, although that was not enough to save coach Asmir Adzem, who was sacked days after the Final.	While Zrinjski enter the Champions League first qualifying round, league runners-up and cup winners Zeljeznicar join city rivals Sarajevo and Siroki Brijeg – who finished third and fourth in the league respectively - in the first qualifying round of the Europa League
Bulgaria FIRST PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE *by Rumen Paytashev*	Ludogorets Razgrad won their seventh consecutive title to close in on CSKA Sofia's record nine in a row. Crowned champions four rounds before the end, the key game was at home to eventual runners-up CSKA when they came from 2-1 down to win 3-2 in the closing minutes.	More than 30,000 Levski Sofia fans turned up to the Bulgarian Cup Final in the hope of seeing their side win a first trophy for nine years. But after Jordi Gomez missed a 12th-minute penalty, Slavia Sofia held out for 120 minutes to claim a goalless draw and then win on spot-kicks.	Ludogorets will play in the first qualifying round of the Champions League. Slavia as cup winners and CSKA as league runners-up will go into the preliminaries for the Europa League, and they will be joined by Levski who beat Cherno More 4-1 in the European play-off Final.
Croatia FIRST LEAGUE *by Sasa Ibrulj*	In 2016-17, Rijeka caught everyone by surprise and broke Dinamo Zagreb's run of 11 successive league championships. And they also managed to keep the latest title race an even contest until the very last stages, in which Dinamo took top spot by three points for their 19th crown.	Having missed out on silverware the previous season, Dinamo justified a big summer investment by winning a third double in four years. They beat fierce rivals Hajduk Split 1-0 in the Final with a goal from Mario Gavranovic confirming their domination of Croatian football.	Starting in the second qualifying round, Dinamo will try to get back in to the Champions League group stage, while Rijeka and Hajduk have the same ambition in Europa League. Dinamo's double gave Osijek, who finished fourth, the last Croatian spot in Europe next term.

RELEGATED/ PROMOTED		PLAYER OF THE SEASON	COACH OF THE SEASON	NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Financially troubled Vllaznia Shkoder, who are one of Albania's oldest clubs, dropped out of the Superliga for the first time, along with Lushnja. Tirana, Albania's most successful club, bounced back at the first attempt and will be joined in the top flight next term by Kastrioti Kruje.	 Loan...Ali Sowe	Gambia's **Ali Sowe** (◂) joined Skenderbeu from Italian side Chievo on loan and spearheaded his team's championship challenge, finishing as the league's top scorer with 21 goals. He scored a hat-trick in a 4–2 win at Lushnja that clinched the title with three games to spare.	In his first full season in charge of Skenderbeu, Ilir Daja led the side to a domestic double and in doing so became the first man to achieve such a distinguished feat since Sulejman Mema's Tirana side were the undisputed kings of Albanian football in 1999.	At 24 years of age, striker Sindrit Guri enjoyed a fine campaign for Kukasi, scoring 20 goals and earning a move to Belgian club Oostende for next season. He also won a first senior cap from national coach Christian Panucci, making his debut against Kosovo in May.
With the top flight being increased to 12 teams next season, the top two in the second tier were promoted, with the third-placed side facing the bottom-team in the Bundesliga in a play-off. In the end, St Polten preserved their status by beating Wiener Neustadt 3-1 on aggregate.	Comparison ...Amadou Haidara	Red Bull Salzburg right-back Stefan Lainer had a fine season, playing 14 games in his side's run to the Europa League semi-finals. Also capable of playing wide in midfield or on the wing, the 25-year-old was reported to be a target for West Bromwich Albion.	While winning the league title is little more than an obligation, rebuilding the Red Bull Salzburg side so impressively and, above all, leading them to a place in the Europa League last four, German boss Marco Rose proved his worth and in May extended his deal with the club until 2020.	Signed from feeder club Liefering after being spotted by Red Bull scouts in his native Mali, 20-year-old midfielder **Amadou Haidara** (◂) has already been compared to Naby Keita – the Guinean who earned a big-money move to Liverpool from Salzburg via RB Leipzig.
As usual, the second division (1B) was played in two parts, with the winners of each section meeting in a play-off to decide the promotion. Cercle Brugge beat Beerschot Wilrijk over two legs to go up, while KV Mechelen finished bottom of the top flight and were relegated.	On top... Club Brugge	Mehdi Carcela arrived at Standard Liege in January and was the main man behind their much-improved form. However, Club Brugge's Ruud Vormer was the player of the season as his goals, assists and work-rate propelled his side to the title.	Former Croatia midfielder Ivan Leko replaced Michel Preud'homme at Club Brugge and proved that he has a bright future in the game. The 40-year-old showed flexibility and man-management skills as he took the club to the league title, receiving plaudits from all sides.	Standard Liege's Belgo-Brazilian winger Edmilson Junior, whose father also played for the club, is not quite a newcomer but this was his breakthrough season. His trickery and skill almost gained him a place in Belgium's World Cup squad and he's one for the future.
Vitez finished bottom and were relegated, but the team above them, Celik Zenica, were reprieved as ninth-place Borac Banja Luka failed to get a licence for the next season. Sloga Simin Han and Zvijezda, two teams with rich owners but no fan base, will make their top-flight debuts.	Call-up... Goran Zakaric	**Goran Zakaric** (◂) had a fine season with Zeljeznicar, with the 25-year-old adding five cup goals to his 12 in the league as he was voted the best in the country by his fellow players. His form pushed him into the national team, which is now coached by Robert Prosinecki.	No team had ever won three successive Bosnian titles and Blaz Sliskovic has been responsible for leading Zrinjski to the last two of those. The former Yugoslav international has been criticised for tactical naivety, but he proved the critics wrong and pushed his team over the limits.	Having made his debut in 2016, 21-year-old Stjepan Loncar was given his chance by Siroki Brijeg boss Goran Sablic and became the team's best player. His performances in midfield for his club were also rewarded with a first international cap for Bosnia.
Despite failing to win a single game during the regular 26-game league campaign, Vitosha Bistritsa beat Pirin Blagoevgrad and second-tier runners-up Lokomotiv Sofia to retain their top-flight place. Pirin were replaced by Second League champions Botev Vratsa.	Hero... Dimitar Dimitrov	For the second season in a row, Ludogorets' Romanian striker Claudio Kesheru was the league's top scorer, beating his previous term's total of 22 by four, despite spells on the bench during the campaign. Angry at being dropped, it has been rumoured that he might move on this summer.	Known as "Hero", **Dimitar Dimitrov** (◂) replaced Georgi Dermendzhiev after Ludogorets exited the Champions League and became only the second coach to win the Bulgarian league with three different sides, following his success with Litex in 1998 and Levski in 2000.	Brazilian left-winger Paulinho moved to Bulgaria from Ukrainian side Zorya Luhansk during the winter transfer window and the 24-year-old scored both goals in a 2-0 win away to Vereya that secured Levski's place in the end-of-season European play-offs.
Cibalia struggled with financial problems which badly affected their performances on the pitch and were relegated. Istra 1961 saved themselves in the play-offs where they defeated Varazdin, while Gorica secured their place in Croatia's elite division.	In charge... Dani Olmo	Dynamo Zagreb's **Dani Olmo** (◂) had a fantastic end to the season, While eight goals and six assists does not sound particularly special, his contribution to the domestic double-winners campaign was impressive as he took charge of their all-dominating midfield.	After lasting year's stunning league-and-cup double, Matijaz Kek continued to impress, keeping Rijeka in the title race once again, despite losing some of their most important players. While their rivals continue to sack coaches, Rijeka are keeping the faith in their Slovenian boss.	After an average campaign with Lokomotiva the season before, 20-year-old Lovro Majer has been a revelation over the past 12 months. Playing in all of the Zagreb side's games, he even managed to get a place in the national side. Now seen as one of the biggest talents in the country.

	HOW THE LEAGUE WAS WON	CUP WINNERS	WHO QUALIFIED FOR EUROPE
Cyprus FIRST DIVISION *by Nick Bidwell*	APOEL clinched their sixth straight championship, but it was anything but a formality. Early in the season they were sloppy and ended up in a tense to-and-fro battle for top spot with Apollon Limassol. The turning point was APOEL's 2-1 home victory over Apollon in late April.	AEK Larnaca, who are very much an Iberian team playing on Cypriot soil, came from behind to beat Apollon Limassol 2-1 in the Final. Veteran Spanish midfielder Alcoran slotted home the winner 20 minutes from time after Florian Taulemesse had put AEK level.	APOEL have to go through the Champions League sifting process, starting in the first preliminary stage. Apollon Limassol and third-place Anorthosis Famagusta have a Europa League date, as do domestic cup holders, AEK Larnaca who begin a round later.
Czech Republic FIRST LEAGUE *by Sam Beckwith*	After winning their first 14 games, Viktoria Plzen went into the winter break with a 14-point lead over Slavia Prague. They struggled in the spring, allowing Slavia to move to within five points by April, but ultimately clinched their fifth title in eight seasons with a game to spare.	Stanislav Tecl scored twice as Slavia Prague beat Jablonec 3-1 in the Final at Mlada Boleslav's 5,000-capacity stadium. Plans to hold the game at Sparta Prague's Generali Arena stadium were changed after Jablonec complained that a Prague venue favoured their opponents.	Viktoria Plzen go straight into the Champions League group stage, with Slavia Prague in the third qualifying round. Jablonec will be in the Europa League group stage, while Sigma Olomouc and Sparta Prague, fourth and fifth in the league respectively will play in the qualifiers.
Denmark SUPERLIGA *by Jim Holden*	Looking like champions for most of the campaign, a late collapse from Brondby opened the door for **Midtjylland** (▸). The key game came in the penultimate round when defender Bubacarr Sanneh scored the only goal as Midtjylland won 1-0 at Brondby to take the title.	At least Brondby had the consolation of winning the Danish Cup for the first time in 11 seasons. Alexander Zorninger's side knocked out Copenhagen and Midtjylland on their way to the Final, where they beat Silkeborg 3-1 thanks to two goals from Kamil Wilczek.	Midtjylland will start the Champions League in the second qualifying round. Brondby are joined in the preliminary round of the Europa League by Nordsjaelland, who finished third in the Superliga, and Copenhagen, who scraped in via a 4-1 play-off victory against AGF Aarhus.
Greece SUPERLEAGUE *by Nick Bidwell*	AEK won a first title since 1994 to end Olympiakos' seven seasons of success. Runners-up PAOK were undone by a loss of form and the antics of president Ivan Savvidis, who earned his club a three-point penalty for storming onto the pitch with a gun during March's game against AEK.	There was plenty going on in this year's Final between PAOK and AEK: supporters clashing outside the Athens Olympic Stadium, two goals, one missed penalty and three red cards. The better team on the day, **PAOK** (▸) won 2-0 with goals from Vierinha and Dimitris Pelkas.	The third qualifying stage of the Champions League will be AEK's continental port of entry, while PAOK will start in the same competition a round earlier. Olympiakos, Atromitos and Asteras Tripoli – who were third, fourth and fifth – will take part in Europa League qualification.
Holland EREDIVISIE *by Klaas-Jan Droppert*	**PSV** (▸) clinched their 24th title on matchday 31 with a 3-0 victory over their closest challengers Ajax. To many observers, the Eindhoven club's way of playing hardly sparkled, but Phillip Cocu's team were simply the side that made the fewest mistakes throughout the campaign.	Resigning champions Feyenoord, who had a mediocre season, beat AZ 3-0 in the Final. Once again the Alkmaar club, who also lost the Final last year, weren't able to beat Holland's traditional top three this season. Feyenoord played all six cup ties at home.	PSV enter the fourth preliminary round of the Champions League, while runners-up Ajax play in the second round. Third-place AZ and play-off winners Vitesse join the Europa League's second preliminary round. Cup winners Feyenoord will enter one round later.
Hungary NEMZETI BAJNOKSAG I *by Peterjon Cresswell*	Having had the upper hand over Ferencvaros in the league for most of the season, Videoton secured the championship with a game to spare with a 2-0 victory over Honved. It was a third title for the team from Szekesfehervar, to go with their successes in 2011 and 2015.	Bidding for their first major trophy, Puskas Akademia took Ujpest to penalties with a 2-2 draw. The shoot-out was also neck and neck until Ujpest's Serbian keeper Filip Pajovic saved from 21-year-old defender Janos Hegedus to claim a 10th Hungarian Cup for his side.	Videoton will start in the Champions League first qualifying round, while Ferencvaros will take little consolation for their Europa League slot after chasing them all spring for the title. As cup winners, Ujpest passed another Europa League berth down to Honved.

RELEGATED/ PROMOTED		PLAYER OF THE SEASON	COACH OF THE SEASON	NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Ethnikos Achna and Aris Limassol went down automatically, with Olympiakos Nicosia suffering the same fate in the post-season relegation round-robin group. Enosis Neon Paralimni went up as second division champions as the top flight is reduced to 12 clubs next season.	 Elusive... Roland Sallai	More or less unknown in his homeland, French striker Florian Taulemesse was the marksman no one could shut down, rattling in 28 goals in all competitions for AEK Larnaca. Previously with Belgian side Eupen, he has also played for a clutch of lower-league sides in France and Spain.	Even though his team came up somewhat short in both main domestic competitions, Apollon Limassol's Sofronis Avgousti nevertheless deserves much praise. His side were the most attractive team to watch in the country and always played with bravery and spirit.	In his first season at APOEL, following a summer switch from Hungarian academy club Puskas FC, 21-year-old attacking midfielder **Roland Sallai** (◄) settled in well at his new club and was imaginative, aware and elusive. He is already a full international.
The country's second city will be without top-tier football next season after Zbrojovka Brno went down with Vysocina Jihlava. Well-supported Silesian side SFC Opava return to the top flight along with Pribram, who spent just one season in the second-tier.	 Assists... Jan Kopic	With a league-leading 12 assists, Viktoria Plzen's wide midfielder **Jan Kopic** (◄) was one of the title-winning side's most consistent performers throughout what was an up-and-down season. The 28-year-old also chipped in with six goals of his own.	After leading Sigma Olomouc to promotion last season, former youth-team coach Vaclav Jilek – who is also an assistant coach with the national under-21 side – enjoyed a remarkable season as his unheralded side became the first newly promoted Czech club to qualify for Europe.	Having finally established himself in the first team, Vaclav Jemelka grew in stature and made his mark as a cornerstone of a solid Sigma Olomouc defence which conceded just 22 goals during the league season. The 22-year-old also earned a call-up to the national squad in May.
Vejle claimed automatic promotion after winning Division One and replaced Helsingor, who lost out in the relegation play-offs. Under a complicated system there were then two more play-off games, with Vendsyssel and Esbjerg swapping places with Lyngby and Silkeborg.	 Close...Brondby (in yellow) and Midtjylland	Veteran Jakob Poulsen was a calming influence and very much the inspiration for Midtylland's late title charge in an exciting Superliga season. The 34-year-old captain had the most assists of any player in the campaign and also scored eight goals from central midfield.	Jess Thorup has long been regarded as one of the country's finest coaches, and the former under-21 boss proved that by winning the title for Midtjylland. His 3-4-3 system was the basis for a consistent season and he is likely to be the next coach of the senior Denmark side.	Mathias Jensen made a serious breakthrough, scoring 14 goals for Nordsjaelland from central midfield and winning the DBU talent of the year honour. He was given the captain's armband halfway through the season even though he had only just turned 22.
Rock bottom Platanias – who only managed two wins all season – and Kerkyra were sent packing from the Superleague. They will be replaced by OFI Crete and Salonika outfit Aris. Both clubs are Greek football grandees, with rich, successful traditions.	Better team ...PAOK	AEK's Croat striker Marko Livaja was frequently in a state of grace. The 24-year-old is mobile and intelligent, creative and sharp. Although capped at every level from under-15 to under-21, he is yet earn full international honours for his country but must be in the waiting room.	In his second spell at the AEK helm, Spanish coach Manolo Jimenez was an inspiring leader for the surprise champions, who conceded just 12 goals in the league. Incredibly, he was shown the door at the end of the season, his job going to ex-Panathinaikos boss Marinos Ouzounidis.	Able to play anywhere along the front line, goal-hungry Apollon Smyrni attacker Christos Almpanis had a fine season despite his club struggling to a 14th-place finish. A former Greek under-21 international, he will be lining up for champions AEK next season.
Twente, who were Eredivisie champions in 2010 went down, along with Sparta Rotterdam and Roda JC, who both lost in the play-offs. Fortuna Sittard are back in the top flight after 16 years, with De Graafschap and Emmen – for the first time in their history – also going up.	 Ahead ...PSV	Alireza Jahanbakhsh was the league's top scorer with 21 goals. However, despite his good statistics – he also managed 18 assists and 114 attempts on goal – it didn't bring AZ any silverware. The Iranian international will probably leave the club after this summer's World Cup finals.	Clinching prizes with top clubs is remarkable, but keeping the team with the smallest budget out of the relegation zone is an even greater performance. So this title should go to Mitchell Van der Gaag, who steered Excelsior to the 11th place. He will coach NAC Breda next season.	Vitesse midfielder Mason Mount was a vital cog in the Arnhem club's Europa League play-off triumph. The 19-year-old Chelsea loanee is a master at set-pieces, scoring eight league goals and five times during the play-offs. His form has attracted the interest of Ajax.
Controversy marked the last day of the season as Diosgyor beat already crowned champions Videoton with a late goal to send Balmazujvaros down with Vasas. MTK Budapest were runaway winners of NBII, while runners-up Kisvarda will be top-flight debutants next term.	 Eye-catching ...Joseph Paintsil	Discovery of the season during the previous campaign, Ujpest's 22-year-old midfielder Donat Zsoter continued to impress, scoring a spectacular equaliser for his side in the Hungarian Cup Final and then converting his spot-kick in the shoot-out.	A double-winning coach with Partizan of Belgrade in 2017, Marko Nikolic headed over the Hungarian border last season to do a similarly impressive job at Videoton, winning the league and meeting his former Serb employees in the Europa League after Vidi's shock win over Bordeaux.	Signed last year from Ghanian side Tema Youth, **Joseph Paintsil** (◄) was hugely impressive in the Ferencvaros midfield, with his goal tally reaching double figures. The 20-year-old also caught the eye of his national team selectors and made his international bow.

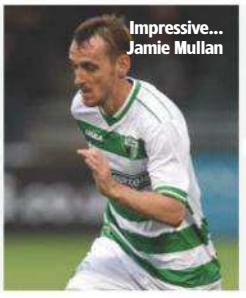
	HOW THE LEAGUE WAS WON	CUP WINNERS	WHO QUALIFIED FOR EUROPE
Israel PREMIER LEAGUE *by Nick Bidwell*	Beaten only once at home all season, that defeat came on the day Hapoel Be'er Sheva clinched the championship – a 1-0 loss to runners-up Maccabi Tel Aviv. They suffered only two post-new year defeats, both of which were to runners-up Maccabi Tel Aviv.	Hapoel Haifa, taking part in their first State Cup Final for 14 years, had too much showpiece staying power for opponents Beitar Jerusalem, who also finished third in the league. The Sharks won 3-1 after extra-time to claim their first major silverware since 1974.	**Hapoel Be'er Sheva** (▸) will be in the draw for the first preliminary round of the Champions League. Maccabi Tel Aviv and Beitar Jerusalem enter the Europa League at the first qualifying stage, while cup winners Hapoel Haifa start in the second qualifying phase.
Luxembourg NATIONAL DIVISION *by Nick Bidwell*	All-powerful southern outfit F91 Dudelange clinched their third consecutive league championship and their eighth Grand Duchy crown in the last decade. Beaten only twice all season, they were particularly strong on home soil, picking up 37 points from a possible 39.	After a goalless 120 minutes, Racing edged out Hostert in a penalty shoot-out at Stade Josy Barthelin Luxembourg City. It was very much a backs-against-the-wall triumph for coach Patrick Grettnich's gritty side, who had two players sent off in normal time.	Dudelange will take part in the first qualifying round of the Champions League. Their closest challengers and eventual runners-up Progres Niederkorn, and Fola Esch who finished third, have to pre-qualify for the Europa League group stage, as do cup winners Racing.
Macedonia FIRST LEAGUE *by Milorad Stojmanovski*	Shkendija claimed their second national title with a massive 35-points gap to runners-up Vardar. With a record haul of 91 points, they won 29 of their 36 league games and also became the first side to score over 100 goals, ending with amazing goal difference of 101-27.	Despite a poor league campaign, cup holders Pelister reached the Final once again. However, this time Shkendija gained revenge for last year's penalty shoot-out defeat with a 3-0 victory. Visar Musliu, with two, and Besart Ibraimi were the goalscorers.	Shkendija start next term's continental adventure in the first qualifying round of the Champions League. Vardar, Rabotnicki and Shkupi go into the first qualifying round of the Europa League, while Sileks missed out by a point after winning just one of their last seven games.
Malta PREMIER LEAGUE *by Dominic Aquilina*	**Valletta** (▸) won the title for a 24th time on a dramatic last day of the season. Long-term leaders Balzan saw their dreams of a first-ever championship disappear as they lost 1-0 at Hibernians, while Valletta beat Gzira United 2-1 to finish three points clear at the top of the table.	Goals from Kyrian Nwoko and Santiago Malano gave Valletta the domestic double as they beat Birkirkara 2-1 in the FA Trophy. It was the third meeting between the two teams in the Final of a competition that is in its 80th edition, with Valletta having won all three.	While double winners Valletta will start their Champions League campaign in the first qualifying round, Balzan are the first qualifying round of the Europa League. Gzira United and Birkirkara enter the Europa League in the preliminary round.
Montenegro FIRST LEAGUE *by Dejan Panic*	Champions for a third time, Sutjeska Niksic finished 22 points ahead of Buducnost Podgorica and wrapped up the league six games before the end of the campaign. En route to the title, goalkeeper Vladan Giljen set a new record by not conceding a goal for 1,019 minutes.	Admir Adrovic scored both goals as Mladost Podgorica beat second-tier Igalo 2-0 in the Final. It is a third Montenegrin Cup triumph for a side who first won the trophy in 2015. Sixth-place Rudar were delighted by the Final result as it secured them a place in Europe.	Sutjeska will play in Champions League qualifiers, while **Buducnost** (▸), cup winners Mladost and Rudar go into the Europa League qualifiers. Fourth-place Grbalj and Zeta, in fifth, were denied licences for Europe as they failed to file the required documents.
Northern Ireland PREMIERSHIP *by Roy Kitson*	A nail-biting campaign saw Crusaders, who were pipped at the post by Linfield in 2017, regain top spot after a long battle with Coleraine, who lost only one league game all season. Crues finished two points clear, securing the title on the last day with a 2-1 win at Ballymena.	Coleraine gained some consolation for their runners-up spot in the league as they defeated Cliftonville 3-1 to win the Irish Cup for the first time since 2003 in front of a crowd of 12,000. The previous season, Linfield had beaten Coleraine 3-0 in the Final.	The Champions League spot went to Crusaders, while Coleraine, along with third-placed Glenavon, and fifth-placed Cliftonville – with a dramatic 3-2 play-off win over Glentoran at Solitude – sealed a place in next season's Europa League first qualifying round.

RELEGATED/ PROMOTED		PLAYER OF THE SEASON	COACH OF THE SEASON	NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Just 12 months after promotion, Hapoel Acre went through three coaches, were deducted two points for budgetary control issues and went down, with Hapoel Ashkelon. Hapoel Tel Aviv ran away with the second division and went up with Hapoel Hadera.	Prelims... Hapoel Be'er Sheva	Maccabi Netanya's Arab-Israeli playmaker Dia Saba proved himself to be the best finisher in the country by some margin, with 24 goals – which was 11 better than the next best in the scoring charts. Small but deadly, the 25-year-old has been linked with a move to MLS.	Former Israeli international defender Nir Klinger performed wonders at Hapoel Haifa, transforming a seemingly dispirited, aimless group into a resourceful and effective unit. He steered the team to a State Cup triumph and a surprise top-four placing in the league.	Twenty-year-old Guinean centre-back Mohamed Aly Camara was the rock at the heart of the Hapoel Ra'anana defence. Athletic, quick, tenacious and boasting amazing powers of recovery, there are reported to be a number of French clubs on the 20-year-old's trail.
Newly promoted Esch went straight down again with a meagre four points. They and second-bottom Rodange will be replaced by second-tier champions Etzella Ettelbruck and runners-up Rumelange. In the play-offs, Rosport beat Kaerjeng to retain their top-flight status.	Gifted... David Turpel	Dudelange's striker **David Turpel** (◄) was in a league of his own, getting onto the first division scoresheet no fewer than 33 times. Gifted and aggressive as well as hard-working, the 25-year-old Luxembourg international seems destined for bigger and better things.	Thanks to his tactical flair and man-management skills, former international striker Paolo Amodio transformed Progres Niederkorn into a genuine domestic force. He was the architect of their victory over Rangers in a Europa League tie early in the season.	Eighteen-year-old Hostert right-back Cedric Steinmetz was consistency personified throughout the campaign. Composed, disciplined and enterprising, it is incredible to think that he had never played as a full-back prior to the 2017-18 season, having started out as a striker.
Champions of the Second League's East and West sections respectively, Belasica and Makedonija GP were promoted and replace Skopje and Pelister. Pobeda preserved their place in the top flight by beating second-tier Pobeda 2–1 in a promotion/ relegation play-off.	 Noticed... Visar Musliu	Once of Schalke, and an international who has also played for clubs in Ukraine and Cyprus, Besart Ibraimi was the league's top scorer for the third season in a row. Now 31 years of age, his 23 goals for Shkendija was three more than he got last season but three less than the one before.	Having arrived from neighbouring Renova last June, Kjatip Osmani led Shkendija to an impressive double and only failed to progress beyond the Europa League play-off round after being drawn against Milan. His bright, attacking side lost just three league games.	Having first been noticed with Vardar last season, **Visar Musliu** (◄) left in mid-season to sign for Prishtina before being sent out on loan to Shkendija. Part of the squad that reached the Euro Under-21 finals last summer, the centre-back made his senior debut in September.
Bottom-of-the-table Lija Athletic, who won just one league game after winning last term's second-tier title, were relegated along with Naxxar Lions and are replaced by Qormi and Pieta' Hotspurs. Tarxien Rainbows retained their place after beating Zejtun Corinthians in a play-off.	League title ...Valletta	Having won the award in 2005, 2006, and 2015 playing for Hibernians, 37-year-old Gzira United captain Andrew Cohen was named the MFA Footballer of the Year for a record fourth time after leading his side to third in the league and a place in next season's Europa League.	Having led Gzira United into Europe for only the second time in the club's history, Darren Abdilla signed a new four-year deal with the club in May. Just a year older than his captain, Andrew Cohen, the coach's tactical know-how saw his side finish third, just seven points behind Valletta.	Despite Tarxien Rainbows' stuttering form in the early stage of the season, 10 goals from Brazilian striker Ricardo Silva Faria, or Ricardinho as he is also known, saw the club escape from the automatic relegation places and preserve their top-flight status in the play-off.
Decic finished last and were relegated, while Petrovac saved themselves via the play-offs against Mladost Ljeskopolje. In the other play-off, Kom lost to Lovcen, who return to the top flight after one season. Mornar celebrated promotion after two seasons in the second tier.	Europa campaign... Buducnost (in blue)	Igor Ivanovic was named player of the season by the Union of professional players. The 27-year-old winger with champions Sutjeska, who had earlier spells playing in Serbia and Azerbaijan, also finished the campaign as the league's top scorer with 14 goals.	No question that Nikola Rakojevic deserves all the plaudits for guiding Sutjeska to an undisputed league title. A champion with Mladost Podgorica in 2016, the 60-year-old has proved once again that he is currently the best coach working in the Montenegrin league.	Centre-back Predrag Jovic only joined Grbalj from Serbian side Proleter Novi Sad in the winter break, but he was named man of the match six times as his side finished fourth. It looks almost certain that he will move on to a bigger club this summer, perhaps even going abroad.
Ballinamallard United and Carrick Rangers were replaced by Newry City and Institute, who overcame the loss of their Riverside Stadium which was destroyed by storms in August. They will play at Brandywell, home of League of Ireland club Derry City, next season.	 Veteran... Brian Jensen	Crusaders 22-year-old right-winger Gavin Whyte was a vital and inspirational member of the league winning-side, scoring 21 goals and impressing in Northern Ireland's under-21 squad, winning a place in the senior squad for the South American tour this summer.	In charge of Coleraine since February 2011, former midfielder Oran Kearney defied the odds to steer the club to a runners-up spot in the league and victory in the Irish Cup Final against Cliftonville. His side played exciting football and were always ready to battle to the very end.	A major factor in Crusaders success was 42-year-old Danish goalkeeper **Brian Jensen** (◄) who joined from Mansfield Town last summer to replace the injured Sean O'Neill. The former West Brom and Burnley stopper displayed fine leadership qualities and made important saves.

	HOW THE LEAGUE WAS WON	CUP WINNERS	WHO QUALIFIED FOR EUROPE
Poland EKSTRAKLASA *by Dariusz Kurowski*	Legia Warsaw won the title with a three-point margin over Jagiellonia Bialystok in what was described as "a turtle race". The champions lost 11 games and their season ended with an abandoned game at Lech Poznan when home fans invaded the pitch.	**Legia** (▸) completed the double with a 2-1 victory over holders Arka Gdynia in the Final. Jaroslaw Niezgoda and Portuguese midfielder Cafu scored for the Warsaw side, with Dawid Soldecki getting a consolation goal for his side in injury time.	Legia will play in qualifiers for the Champions League. Runners-up Jagiellonia, third-place Lech and Gornik Zabrze, who were fourth, enter the Europa League – with the latter returning to European competition after a 23-year absence.
Portugal PRIMEIRA LIGA *by Tom Kundert*	Porto played with a verve and aggressiveness not seen for many a campaign to end four years without a trophy. Leading for most of the season, they dropped to second, behind Benfica, at Easter but regained top spot with a dramatic last-gasp win away to their great rivals.	In one of the biggest Portuguese Cup Final upsets, Desportivo das Aves beat Lisbon giants Sporting 2-1 to claim their first piece of silverware. Alexandre Guedes, a former Sporting youth striker, scored both goals while 42-year-old keeper Quim played a blinder.	Porto go into the group phase of the Champions League while Benfica will have to negotiate the qualifiers to join them. Sporting and Braga will play in the Europa League, as will Rio Ave who benefit from Aves failing to register for a UEFA competition licence in time.
Romania LIGA 1 *by Emmanuel Rosu*	Having overcame the financial difficulties that almost saw them go bust two years ago, CFR Cluj won the title on the last day of the play-offs, finishing ahead of FCSB – formerly known as Steaua – for their first championship in six years. However, coach Dan Petrescu looks set to leave.	CS U Craiova won their first trophy in 25 years, beating second-tier Hermannstadt 2-0 in the Final. Under former Italy under-21 coach Devis Mangia, they played a fast, attacking style of football, which even won them plaudits from rival supporters and club officials.	Next season Romania will only have one club competing for Champions League qualification, with CFR Cluj starting in the second qualifying round. **FCSB** (▸), cup winners CS U Craiova and fourth-place Viitorul Constanta will play in the early rounds of the Europa League.
Russia PREMIER LEAGUE *by Victor Gusev*	After taking top spot from Zenit in October, **Lokomotiv Moscow** (▸) secured the title by beating the team from Saint Petersburg 1-0 at home in the penultimate round. Loko, who won the league for the third time in their history, finished two points ahead of CSKA Moscow.	Premier League strugglers Tosno, who are based just outside Saint Petersburg, beat second-tier side Avangard Kursk 2-1 in the Final, which was played in Volgograd. Tosno beat Spartak Moscow in the semi-finals, while Avangard put out CSKA in the round of 32.	Lokomotiv, CSKA and Spartak will play in the Champions League. Since Tosno failed to get a licence to compete in European competition, they will be replaced in the Europa League group stage by fourth-placed Krasnodar. Zenit and Ufa will play in the qualifiers.
Scotland PREMIERSHIP *by Phil Gordon*	Celtic went unbeaten for the first 17 games of the campaign – until a 4-0 loss at Hearts in December ended a 69-match run under Brendan Rodgers' tenure. Victories included a 3-2 win away to Rangers with 10 men, and a 5-0 thrashing of their Glasgow rivals at Celtic Park.	A 3-0 win over Motherwell saw Celtic write themselves into the history books as the first club to complete back-to-back trebles, by defeating Motherwell 2-0 with a stunning volley from Callum McGregor and a goal from Olivier Ntcham. Motherwell also lost in the League Cup Final to Celtic.	Celtic will enter the Champions League at the first qualifying stage, with runners-up Aberdeen in the second qualifying round of the Europa League. Rangers, who finished third, and Hibernian, in fourth place, will start in the first qualifying round of the Europa League.
Serbia SUPERLIGA *by Vladimir Novak*	Dominant from start to finish, Red Star Belgrade won their 28th league title playing a far better brand of football than in previous years. They suffered only one defeat and finished a massive 17 points ahead of title-holders and arch-rivals Partizan Belgrade, who finished as runners-up.	A 2-1 win over Mladost Lucani in the Final saw Partizan lift the cup for a third season in a row and 15th time in total. But they were on the verge of going out in the semis, losing the away leg 4-2 to Cukaricki before winning the return 2-0 with a last-minute goal by veteran Sasa Ilic.	Red Star will play in the Champions League first qualifying round next season, while Serbian Cup winners Partizan, third-place Radnicki Nis and Spartak Subotica, who finished fourth in the league, will all enter the Europa League in the first qualifying round.

RELEGATED/ PROMOTED		PLAYER OF THE SEASON	COACH OF THE SEASON	NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Sandecja Nowy Sacz lasted just one season in the top flight and went down with Bruk-Bet Termalika Nieciecza, whose ground they shared. Miedz Legnica will play in the Ekstraklasa for the first time after being promoted along with Zaglebie Sosnowiec.	Double...Legia	Wisla Krakow's Spanish centre-forward Carlitos was the league's top scorer with 24 goals. Playing reserve-team football at Villarreal in his homeland a year ago, the 27-year-old displayed great technical skill and speed as well as a keen eye for goal.	After leading Gornik Zabrze to promotion last season, Marcin Brosz's side were expected to be involved in a battle against relegation. However, he led them to fourth place and made his reputation as a coach who is willing to give young players a chance.	A hard worker who can run all game, Gornik's 20-year-old defensive midfielder Szymon Zurkowski was named in the country's 35-man preliminary squad for the World Cup finals, announced in May, despite having yet to win a cap at senior level.
Estoril and Pacos de Ferreira, both of whom have played European football in the past five years, drop down to the second tier. Coming up are two clubs representing Portugal's Atlantic islands: Nacional da Madeira, and Santa Clara, from the Azores.	Energy...Sergio Conceicao	Sporting midfielder Bruno Fernandes took the Liga by storm in his debut season after several years learning his trade in Italy. His goal prowess of 16 goals in 56 matches, plus tactical discipline and tremendous work rate, was rewarded with a place in Portugal's World Cup squad.	A former favourite at Porto in his playing days, **Sergio Conceicao** (◄) made light of the club's UEFA financial fairplay transfer ban, injecting positive energy into a moribund institution and completely turning around the fortunes of a team that had forgotten how to win.	Japanese attacking midfielder Shoya Nakajima was a thrilling addition to Portugal's top flight during his debut season at Algarve club Portimonense. The 23-year-old attacking midfielder scored 10 goals and provided 13 assists and a step up to a bigger club is a certainty.
Juventus Bucuresti return to Liga II after just a season in the top flight, along with ACS Poli Timisoara, while Dunarea Calarasi and Hermannstadt will play in the top flight for the first time. Voluntari face a two-leg play-off against Chindia Targoviste, who were third in the second tier.	Euro-bound ...FCSB	CFR Cluj's 33-year-old Paulo Vinicius was a rock at the heart of the champions defence. The Brazilian, who also managed to score five goals in his 34 games, was appearing in Romanian football for the first time, having played in Portugal and Cyprus for the previous 10 years.	Alexandru Pelici led Hermannstadt to promotion a year after the club celebrated ascension from the third tier. He also guided the team to the cup Final, beating four top-flight clubs in the process, including big-spending FCSB, who were beaten 3-0.	In desperate need of a central defender, Bogdan Planic's arrival at FCSB from Vojvodina for €350,000 was regarded just as an emergency buy with no great expectations for the 26-year-old. It turned out, however, to be one of the club's best deals of the past few years.
Cup winners Tosno, the league's farthest Eastern team SKA-Khabarovsk and the once mighty Anzhi Makhachkala were all relegated. Orenburg and Kriliya Sovetov Samara returned to the Premier League, while Yenisey Krasnoyarsk enter the top flight for the first time.	Top spot... Lokomotiv	Spartak Moscow's 26-year-old attacking midfielder Quincy Promes made up for missing out on the World Cup finals by finishing as the Premier League's top scorer with 15 goals in 26 games. The Dutchman finished one goal ahead of Krasnodar's Fyodor Smolov.	Lokomotiv Moscow's coach when they won their previous titles in 2002 and 2004, Yuri Semin returned to the club in the summer of 2016 and won that season's Russian Cup. Last term he did even better, leading a solid, young squad to the league championship.	After scoring the winning goal in the 2016 Euro Final for Portugal, Eder's career had seemingly stalled. However, after joining Lokomotiv Moscow in the summer of 2017 he was part of a title-winning side and scored the all-important goal against Zenit in May.
St Mirren return to the top flight after five years and replace Ross County, who were relegated on the last day of the season to end a six-year Premiership stay. Partick Thistle went down after four seasons, losing in the play-offs to Livingston, who were last in the top flight in 2005.	Pass master... Scott Brown (right)	Celtic captain **Scott Brown** (◄) won everything and took every award going, being voted player of the season by his club, the PFA, sports writers and sponsors. He had one of the Champions League's best passing stats and was peerless in his 11th year at the club.	While some managers may have found it difficult to follow the treble of a debut season north of the border, former Swansea City and Liverpool boss Brendan Rodgers kept the success going and made it six trophies in the two years that he's been in the hot seat at Celtic.	Although he missed out on the PFA Young Player of Year to Celtic's Kieran Tierney, Aberdeen's 21-year-old centre-back Scott McKenna not only earned a Scotland cap in his first full season but received lavish praise from Willie Miller, who captained the club to a European trophy in 1983.
Bottom of the table Borac Cacak and Javor Ivanjica were relegated, while Proleter Novi Sad and Dinamo Vranje are promoted and will both play in the top flight for the first time next term. It will also be the first time that two teams from Novi Sad are members of top flight.	Contract... Vladan Milojevic	Aleksandar Pesic arrived at Red Star last summer having previously been warming the bench in Serie A with Atalanta, where he was on loan from Toulouse. However, he finished the season with 25 goals and 13 assists, was the league's top scorer and was named most valuable player.	**Vladan Milojevic** (◄) did a great job in his first season at Red Star, winning the title and steering the team to the last 32 of the Europa League. Despite speculation that he would leave at the end of the season, he has signed a lucrative new contract to stay in Belgrade.	Svetozar Markovic only made his debut for Partizan in March but the 18-year-old centre-back was so impressive that he became a regular for the rest of the league season. He is said to be on Manchester United's radar, while Anderlecht have also expressed their interest.

	HOW THE LEAGUE WAS WON	CUP WINNERS	WHO QUALIFIED FOR EUROPE
Slovakia SUPER LIGA *by Peterjon Cresswell*	Despite losing more games than the teams in second and third place, Spartak Trnava won their first national title for 45 years thanks to a Belgrade-born, London-raised coach by the name of El Maestro. A 2-0 win over DAC sealed the title, which they won by five points.	Cup holders Slovan Bratislava retained the trophy with a 3-1 victory over Ruzomberok in the Final thanks to goals from Andraz Sporar, Vasil Bozhikov and David Holman. The real work had been done in the semi-finals, where they beat Trnava on penalties.	While Spartak Trnava returned to Europe's elite competition, Slovan and DAC qualified for the Europa League. A 99th-minute winner by Philip Azango away at Zilina allowed Trencin to beat last year's league champions 2-1 in a play-off for the third Europa spot.
Slovenia PRVALIGA *by Peterjon Cresswell*	A pitch invasion by their own fans on the final day of the season, following a late equaliser from the penalty spot at Domzale, sparked wild scenes among visiting supporters and gave Olimpija Ljubljana their second title in three years, pipping Maribor on head-to-head away goals scored.	Aluminij made the Final thanks to a stoppage-time penalty by Croatian journeyman Josip Zeba. That win over Gorica set the Kidricevo side up for a one-sided showdown with recently crowned league champions Olimpija, who steamrollered the provincial outfit 6-1.	Olimpija are in the first qualifying round of the Champions League, while Maribor enter the first qualifying round of the Europa League, along with third-place Domzale and Rudar, who took fourth place ahead of Celje on their head-to-head points record.
Switzerland SUPER LEAGUE *by Brian Homewood*	**Young Boys** (▶) won the championship for the first time since 1986 and in the process ended Basle's run of eight successive titles. They went top with a 3-0 win over Lugano in their seventh game and never looked back, eventually finishing 15 points clear of the defending champions.	Zurich beat Young Boys 2-1 to deny YB the double. Michael Frey gave Zurich an early lead and, despite having Pape Sarr sent off, Antonio Marchesano added a second. Miralem Sulejmani pulled one back for Young Boys who had also lost on their previous three Final appearances.	Young Boys qualified for the Champions League play-off round while runners-up Basle head into the second qualifying round. Cup winners Zurich went into the Europa League group stage, with Lucerne and St Gallen having to take part in the qualifiers.
Turkey SUPER LIG *by Nick Bidwell*	Brought in late last year for a fourth stint as Galatasaray coach, Fatih Terim led the side to their first Super Lig crown since 2015, doing just enough to stay ahead of Fenerbahce and Istanbul Basaksehir. Instrumental were victories over Istanbul Basaksehir and Besitktas in the final month.	**Akhisarspor** (▶) turned the form book upside down to beat Fenerbahce 3-2 in the Final. Coached by the ex-Galatasaray and Turkey midfielder Okan Buruk, the Aegean side were playing in the fourth tier a decade ago and had never previously won a major honour.	Galatasaray go direct to the Champions League group phase, while championship runners-up Fenerbahce must pre-qualify. Istanbul Basaksehir and Besiktas will do battle in the qualifying rounds of the Europa League. Cup winners Akhisarspor have a spot in the group stage.
Ukraine PREMIER LEAGUE *by Oleg Zadernovsky*	Shakhtar Donetsk won their seventh Ukrainian title, finishing two points ahead of runners-up Dynamo Kiev – who were docked three points after club president Igor Surkis refused to give his team permission to travel to Mariupol in August due to security issues.	Double winners Shakhtar beat Dynamo Kiev 2-0 in the Cup Final, with second-half goals from Argentinian striker Facundo Ferreira and central defender Yaroslav Rakytskyy, to surpass their opponents record of 11 wins as the most successful club in the tournament.	Shakhtar go directly to the Champions League group stage, with Dynamo Kiev starting from the third qualifying phase. Vorskla Poltava go into the Europa League group stage Zorya Luhansk and Mariupol will start their Europa League campaign in the qualifying rounds.
Wales PREMIER LEAGUE *by Mel Thomas*	As expected, The New Saints claimed a seventh successive title, with striker Greg Draper picking up the golden boot with 22 goals. They finished 14 points clear of runners-up Bangor City, who have failed to get a domestic licence for next season.	Connah's Quay Nomads lifted the Welsh Cup for the first time in their history, coming from a goal down to beat Aberystwyth Town 4-1. Nomads' only previous appearance in the Final of the competition was in 1998, when they lost on penalties to Bangor.	TNS will enter the first qualifying round of the Champions League. Bangor's failure to secure a licence means they are barred from Europe, so Connah's Quay and Bala Town go into the Europa League, along with play-off winners Cefn Druids.

RELEGATED/ PROMOTED		PLAYER OF THE SEASON	COACH OF THE SEASON	NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
A late run failed to save Tatran Presov, who were automatically relegated. Above them, Senica were saved by an away-goal aggregate win over Skalica in the play-off. Second-tier champions Sered will play in the top flight for the first time after decades of league obscurity.	Spark... Marvin Egho	Despite only turniung 21 this May, striker Samuel Mraz successfully made the step up from Senica with a 19-goal campaign for Zilina, making him the league's top scorer. He also made his debut for the country's under-21s, scoring three goals in his first four appearances.	Nestor El Maestro enjoyed a triumphant debut campaign in charge of Spartak Trnava, but the 35-year-old UK citizen – who changed his name from Nestor Jevtic in 2000 – was such a success that he was snapped up by Bulgarian side CSKA Sofia in June.	Brought to Trnava from Austrian side Ried, **Marvin Egho** (◄) was the brightest spark of a low-scoring title-winning attack. The former Austrian under-21 international scored seven times in the league – including the second goal in the decisive win against DAC.
Lasting only one season in the top flight, Ankaran go straight back down. Triglav Kranj fared little better but survived by beating lower-tier challengers NS Drava in a play-off. Mura of Murska Sobota carried on their third-flight form of 2016-17 by winning the Second League outright.	Experience... Rok Kronaveter	Much of Olimpija's title success was down to an impressive defence which conceded just 17 times in their 36 games. Key was the protection and industry of experienced midfielder **Rok Kronaveter** (◄), who also scored the all-important penalty that took the title back to Ljubljana.	Having guided Croatian side Rudes to promotion and the second-tier championship during his first campaign as coach, former Liverpool midfielder Igor Biscan continued the successful start to his new career with a domestic double in his first season in charge of Olimpija.	Jamaican striker Shamar Nicholson impressed in his first European campaign, easing his way into Domzale's side and gaining full international caps. His previous club was Boys' Town in Kingston's Trench Town, where his father was shot dead on the terraces while watching a match.
Lausanne-Sport finished bottom of the table and were relegated. They are replaced by Neuchatel Xamax, who are back in the top flight six years after the club went bankrupt under the calamitous administration of Russian businessman Bulat Chagaev.	Clear... Young Boys	Basle right-back Michael Lang had an outstanding season, both defensively and supporting the attack, as he helped his side reach the last 16 of the Champions League. Unfortunately, he has to compete with Stefan Lichtsteiner for a place in the national team.	Adi Hutter, the 48-year-old Austrian boss of Young Boys, changed the club's philosophy and focused on signing young players as he delivered a first Swiss title for 32 years. His success didn't go unnoticed elsewhere in Europe and he will coach Eintracht Frankfurt next term.	Cameroon-born forward Jean-Pierre Nsame joined Young Boys from second-tier Servette and scored 13 goals in his first Super League season as his side won the league. He also made his full international debut, playing against Nigeria in September in a World Cup qualifier.
Karabukspor, who lost 28 of their 34 league fixtures were the first team to have that sinking feeling. Also sent into exile were Ankara clubs Osmanlispor and Genclerbirligi. Rizespor and Ankaragucu claimed the two automatic promotion slots, while Erzurumspor went up via the play-offs.	Upset... Akhisarspor	With 29 goals in 34 top-flight games, Galatasaray's French striker Bafetimbi Gomis was a man on a marksmanship mission. Appropriately, he scored the goal which sealed the league title for his club, netting from the penalty spot in the 1-0 away win at Goztepe.	If Istanbul Basaksehir are now well-established as a force in Turkish football, a large proportion of the credit belongs to boss Abdullah Avci. Yes, they have a host of high-profile players, but without his motivational skills and tactical expertise they would not be half the side.	Sivasspor's former Turkish under-21 international winger Emre Kilinc enjoyed an excellent first season in the top flight. Creative, lively and boasting a superb left foot, the 23-year-old arrived from second-tier Boluspor early in 2017 and made 33 appearances in the Super Lig.
Second-tier champions Arsenal Kiev replaced bottom Stal. Poltava and Desna Tchernihiv were also promoted, beating – and therefore replacing – top-flight strugglers Chernomorets Odessa and Zirka Kropyvnytskyi 3-1 and 5-1 respectively on aggregate.	Citizenship ...Marlos	Brazilian midfielder **Marlos** (◄), who received citizenship in September and made his Ukraine debut the following month, had a fine season for Shakhtar. As well as 12 assists, his 18 goals in the league was only bettered by the 21 of team-mate Facundo Ferreyra.	Paulo Fonseca did an excellent job by guiding Shakhtar to the golden treble. The Portuguese led the Miners to the victories in the Premier League, Ukraine Cup and Super Cup, and fully deserved the extension of his contract on better terms for two more seasons.	Dynamo Kiev's attack-minded creative midfielder Mykola Shaparenko forced his way into the side and, at the age of just 19, demonstrated that he has the confidence to go with the technical ability that could see him develop into a first-team regular very soon.
Prestatyn Town finished bottom and were relegated with Bangor – whose fall earned a reprieve for Carmarthen Town. A phoenix club created from the demise of Llanelli AFC in 2013, Llanelli Town were promoted along with Caernarfon Town.	 Impressive... Jamie Mullan	Midfielder **Jamie Mullan** (◄) of TNS impressed all season for his side and played a key role as they won both the Premier League and League Cup, scoring the winning goal in the Final of the latter as they beat Cardiff Metropolitan University 1-0.	In his second spell in charge of Cefn Druids, Huw Griffiths led the club to its best-ever placing in the league, finishing in fifth position and then beating Cardiff Met 1-0 in the play-off Final to secure a place in next season's Europa League qualifiers.	A Welsh international futsal player and a fully qualified dentist by trade, Barry Town United wing-back Chris Hugh impressed with a string of consistently outstanding performances following his side's promotion to the Welsh top flight.

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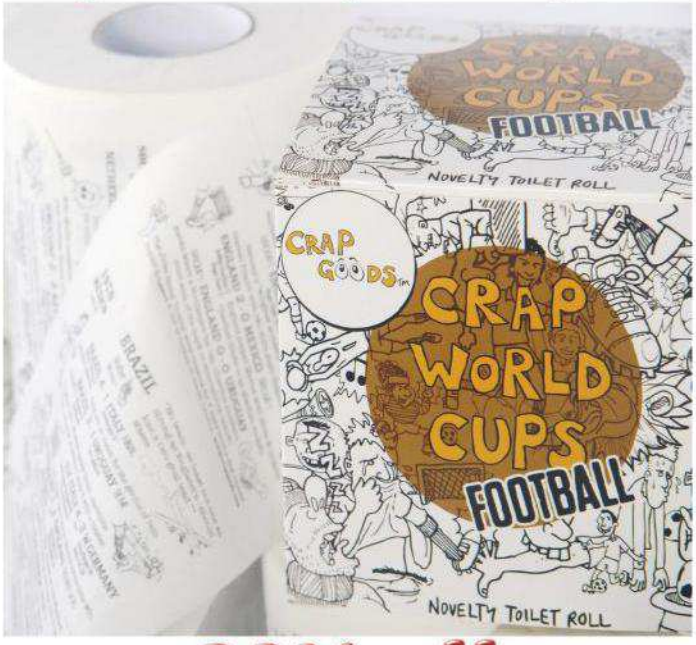

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APRIL 11-JUNE 13, 2018

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

Wednesday April 11

SPAIN: Scoring for an 11th consecutive Champions League game, Cristiano Ronaldo's penalty in the eighth minute of injury time gives Real Madrid a dramatic 4-3 victory over Juventus.

Thursday April 12

AUSTRIA: Trailing 5-2 on aggregate after Ciro Immobile's opening goal for Lazio, Red Bull Salzburg come back to win 6-5 and claim a place in the Europa League semi-finals.
SAUDI ARABIA: Al Hilal retain their Saudi Pro League title with a 4-1 victory over Al Fateh.

Friday April 13

ENGLAND: Premier League clubs vote against introducing VAR next season after agreeing that more testing is required.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich announce that Eintracht Frankfurt boss Niko Kovac will take over from interim coach Jupp Heynckes in July.

Saturday April 14

AUSTRALIA: Newcastle Jets win 8-2 away to Central Coast Mariners in the highest-scoring game in A-League history.
ENGLAND: Fulham's 1-1 draw with Brentford means Wolverhampton Wanders are promoted to the Premier League.
SPAIN: Barcelona beat Valencia 2-1 and set a new La Liga record of 39 games unbeaten.

Sunday April 15

BRAZIL: Corinthians start the defence of their league title with a 2-1 win at home to Fluminense.
ENGLAND: Manchester United's 1-0 loss at home to West Bromwich Albion sees Manchester City confirmed as league champions.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain regain the league with a 7-1 victory over defending champions Monaco.
HOLLAND: PSV seal the title with a 3-0 victory over nearest rivals Ajax, who have two players sent off.

Monday April 16

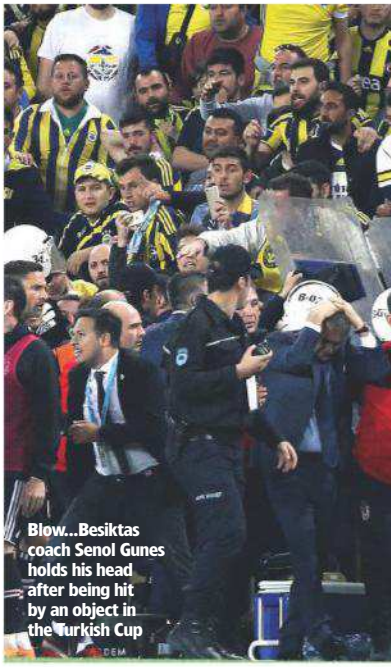
ZANZIBAR: At CECAFA's Under-17 Championship in Burundi, Zanzibar are expelled after they tried to field nine overage players in their game against Sudan on Sunday.

Tuesday April 17

GERMANY: Cologne appoint Markus Anfang as their coach for next season.
SPAIN: Barcelona draw 2-2 at Celta Vigo to make it a record-breaking 39-game unbeaten start to a Spanish top-flight season.

Wednesday April 18

ENGLAND: Joey Barton will become manager of third-tier side Fleetwood Town this summer when his ban for betting on matches ends on June 1.
GERMANY: Coach Niko Kovac will face his future employers Bayern Munich in the German Cup Final after Eintracht Frankfurt beat Schalke 1-0 in the semi-finals.
SWITZERLAND: Andy Rihs, the owner of Young Boys, dies aged 75.


Blow...Besiktas coach Senol Gunes holds his head after being hit by an object in the Turkish Cup

Thursday April 19

SPAIN: Malaga are relegated after they lose 1-0 at Levante.
TURKEY: Fenerbahce's Turkish Cup semi-final is abandoned after Senol Gunes, the coach of Besiktas, is hit on the head by an object thrown from the crowd and has to be taken to hospital. The game is called off with the score at 0-0, following a 2-2 draw in the first leg.

Friday April 20

ENGLAND: Arsene Wenger reveals that he will step down as Arsenal manager at the end of the season.
PORTUGAL: Abel Mwakilama, a Malawi youth international with lower-league side SC Esmoriz, dies of suspected cerebral malaria.
SPAIN: Espanyol sack Quique Sanchez Flores after four defeats in five games.

Saturday April 21

SOUTH AFRICA: Kaizer Chiefs coach Steve Komphela resigns after fans riot at the end of a 2-0 defeat by Free State Stars.
SPAIN: Barcelona stroll to their 29th Spanish Cup success with a 5-0 win against Sevilla in the Final.
UAE: Al Ain secure the UAE Pro-League title with a 4-0 victory over

Solid start...Corinthians celebrate their first goal against Fluminense in the opening game of their defence of the league title

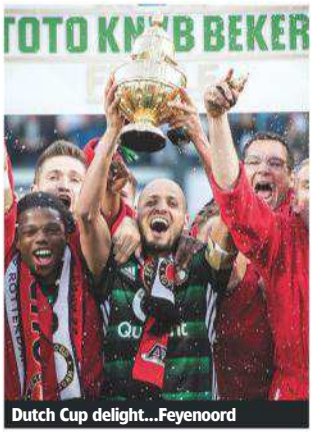
Al Nasr and will claim the host nation's spot at the Club World Cup – unless a team from the UAE wins the AFC Champions League.

Sunday April 22

BOLIVIA: Forced to field a youth team after players go on strike over unpaid wages, Universitario trail Jorge Wilstermann 7-0 at half-time and then forfeit the match.
HOLLAND: Feyenoord beat AZ 3-0 to win the Dutch Cup.
ITALY: Napoli close the gap at the top of Serie A to one point with a 1-0 win at league leaders Juventus. Crotone's 2-1 win at Udinese sees Benevento relegated.
SPAIN: Las Palmas are relegated with a 4-0 loss at home to Alaves.

Monday April 23

GREECE: UEFA ban Panathinaikos from European competition for three seasons for failing to pay outstanding debts.
SPAIN: Barcelona win their second ➤



Dutch Cup delight...Feyenoord

Japan

MIKE PLASTOW

Star treatment...Vissel roll out the red carpet for Andres Iniesta

Record J.League deal tempts Iniesta

Unfashionable Vissel snap up Barcelona and Spain star

The J.League is making headlines once more with the signing of big-name players from around the world. What began with Diego Forlan at Cerezo Osaka in 2014 and Lukas Podolski at Vissel Kobe in 2017, has continued with Jo at Nagoya Grampus this year. But they are nothing compared to Vissel's signing of Barcelona's Andres Iniesta on a three-year deal with a reported annual salary of £22million.

That astronomical figure, if correct, is at least three times more than the previous J.League record that Vissel are already supposedly paying Podolski. To put it in perspective, Vissel's entire payroll for their players and staff last year – including Podolski – was, at around £21m, already the highest wage bill in the J.League.

Having pushed their accounts back into the red with the signing of Podolski, the arrival of the 34-year-old Iniesta – and the ensuing expense – would certainly seem to back up Vissel's stated aim in their official club slogan: "To Be the No1 Club in Asia."

But Vissel, who have only been J.League members since 1997 and have never won anything, were 15 points behind table-toppers Sanfrecce Hiroshima after 15 games this season – a gap that not even Iniesta can be expected to overcome.

The Spaniard, of course, is happy to have a go. "I was blessed with many offers," he says. "The reason I chose Kobe over the other offers was that I was very interested in the project presented by them.

"They have also shown a great amount of trust in me. I think Japan is a great country and their culture is wonderful as well. I hope to get used to the country and contribute to the team."

It would be interesting to know just what 'project' was presented to Iniesta, but there is no question that it has to be about more than just football.

The key lies in the hands of one of Japan's richest men: Hiroshi Mikitani, the club's Kobe born-and-bred chairman and CEO of online retail giant Rakuten Inc. Rakuten are currently Barcelona's shirt sponsor and Mikitani is unquestionably looking to Iniesta to enhance his company's global brand.

But while it may appear that money is no object for one of Japan's least fashionable sides, the J. League is much stricter these days about good management and no club can retain a licence to play in the competition if it records current-account deficits for three years in a row or goes insolvent.

And Vissel's financial shortfall isn't going to be made up through shirt sales alone. Mikitani saved the club from bankruptcy in 2004 and then bailed it out again in 2014 after nine consecutive years of account deficits – which were prior to the introduction of the J.League's new licensing system.

With Vissel back in the red it can only be assumed that Mikitani will sooner or later have to put his hand in his pocket again. That will probably happen with or without success on the pitch, but it would certainly help if Vissel could win something.

As for Iniesta, he is expected to start helping with that plan when he makes a highly anticipated debut on July 22 against Shonan Bellmare. WS

➤ UEFA Youth League title, beating Chelsea 3-0 in the Final.

Tuesday April 24

ITALY: Former Croatia international Igor Tudor is appointed coach of Udinese, hours after Massimo Oddo is axed following an 11-game Serie A losing streak.

Wednesday April 25

CHINA: Chinese FA Cup holders Shanghai Shenhua throw away a two-goal lead to lose 3-2 to third-tier Nantong Zhiyun.
SPAIN: For the second time in 12 months, Real Madrid come from behind at Bayern Munich, and win 2-1 in the Champions League.

Thursday April 26

EUROPA LEAGUE: Despite defender Sime Vrsaljko being sent off after 10 minutes, Atletico Madrid come from a goal down to draw 1-1 at Arsenal. Marseille beat Red Bull Salzburg 2-0 in the other semi-final first leg.

Friday April 27

BRAZIL: FIFA ban Brazilian FA president Marco Polo del Nero for life for taking bribes.
UAE: Diego Maradona quits as coach of Al Fujairah after they miss out on automatic promotion from the UAE second division.

Saturday April 28

ITALY: A year after relegation, Empoli win the Serie B title with a 1-1 draw against Novara.
NORTHERN IRELAND: Crusaders win the Irish Premiership for the third time in four seasons, while Ballinamallard United are relegated on goal difference.
SOUTH AFRICA: Mamelodi Sundowns beat Ajax Cape Town 3-1 to clinch an eighth South African Premiership title.
SPAIN: Sevilla sack Vincenzo Montella and appoint Joaquin Caparros as coach until the end of the season.

Sunday April 29

FRANCE: Edinson Cavani becomes Paris Saint-Germain's record scorer in Ligue 1, with both goals in a 2-2 draw against Guingamp taking him to a total of 115.
GERMANY: Liverpool-bound Naby Keita is sent off for a fourth time this season as RB Leipzig lose 3-0 away to Mainz.
HOLLAND: Eight years after winning the Eredivisie under Steve McClaren, Twente are relegated.
SCOTLAND: Celtic beat Rangers ➤

Australia

SIMON HILL

Victory number four

Software failure costs Jets

You've got to hand it to football in Australia – it keeps coming up with ingenious new ways in which to shoot itself in the foot. So, after a season hamstrung by a row between the clubs and the governing body over the make-up of the FFA Congress, it was no surprise that the destiny of the championship was decided by a software malfunction.

It happened in the ninth minute of the Grand Final, between Newcastle Jets and Melbourne Victory.

Leroy George's free-kick was headed on by James Donachie and swept in by Kosta Barbarouses for what proved to be the only goal of the game for Victory. However, replays confirmed Donachie was offside at the moment the kick was taken – but VAR couldn't intervene because the software failed at the crucial moment, meaning the officials didn't have the necessary evidence with which to overturn the goal.

Which was a pity, because until that point a thrilling finals series had promised to consign a very ordinary regular season into the distant corners of the mind.

Besart Berisha lit the fuse with a tremendous bicycle-kick winner to seal a late come-from-behind win for Victory against Adelaide United in week one, but his goal was topped just a week later when Riley McGree netted an extraordinary "scorpion kick" effort for Newcastle Jets against Melbourne City.

While the other semi-final, between Sydney and Melbourne Victory, didn't have the same quality in terms of goals, it had the kind of emotional drama normally reserved for soap operas.

Victory...celebrating the Grand Final win against Newcastle

> "We've had an almighty challenge this season, and it got to the point where it seemed like the whole country was wanting us to fall over at the final hurdle, but the boys dug deep"
> Melbourne Victory coach Kevin Muscat

Victory led until the fifth minute of stoppage time, when an own goal from ex-Sydney midfielder Terry Antonis leveled things up and sent the game into extra time. The villain then turned hero as he ran half the length of the pitch to score the winner with just three minutes of the additional half hour remaining.

The regular season definitely lacked that kind of weekly narrative. After Sydney regained top spot in round seven, they never relinquished the leadership again, going on to secure their second successive Premiership and becoming the first team to achieve such a feat in the A-League era. Brazilian striker Bobo hit 27 goals in 27 games and received able support from Adrian Mierzejewski.

For Sydney, the Premiership capped a remarkable two-year spell in which they claimed four trophies, and coach Graham Arnold now moves on to lead the national team after the World Cup in Russia.

Newcastle Jets, however, were the story of the season. Without a finals spot in seven years, coach Ernie Merrick instigated an incredible revival, guiding them to second place and a Grand Final.

Merrick made shrewd signings in Roy O'Donovan, Daniel Georgievski, Nikolai Topor-Stanley and Ronald Vargas, while breathing new life into Ben Kantarovski and Jason Hoffman. His two standout players, Dimitri Petratos and Andrew Nabbout, earned national team call-ups, with the latter also securing a move to Urawa Red Diamonds in Japan.

Melbourne City remain the A-League's great

Controversial...Kosta Barbarouses (far right) scores the winning goal

enigma. After starting the season with four straight wins, many believed this would be City's year. Yet, as before, they faltered, and even though third spot was their highest finish, Victory's Grand Final win denied them a place in next year's Asian Champions League.

City did, however, have the outstanding young talent of the year in Daniel Arzani, who earned a place in Bert Van Marwijk's World Cup squad.

Oddly, Melbourne Victory's season wasn't their best. Finishing fourth, some fans booed coach Kevin Muscat midway through the season. But those jeers turned to cheers as he secured the championship.

"We've had an almighty challenge this season, and it got to the point where it seemed like the whole country was wanting us to fall over at the final hurdle, but the boys dug deep," said Muscat.

Of the rest, Adelaide made good progress under Marco Kurz, reaching the FFA Cup Final where they lost to Sydney. Brisbane Roar did well to recover from the nadir of an embarrassing Champions League exit, at the hands of Filipino outfit Ceres-Negros, to scrape into the finals in sixth.

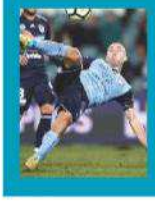
Josep Gombau paid the price at Western Sydney Wanderers as they missed out on finals football for just the second time. The Spaniard is replaced by ex-Liverpool defender Markus Babbel.

Kenny Lowe also went after Perth Glory finished eighth, with Tony Popovic his replacement after an ill-fated stint in Turkey with Karabukspor.

Wellington Phoenix avoided the wooden spoon with a win over Melbourne City in the final round, as Central Coast Mariners' 8-2 capitulation to rivals Newcastle meant they finished last for the second time in three seasons. WS

SEASON'S BEST

Player of Season



ADRIAN MIERZEJEWSKI (Sydney)
A double-figure goal and assist tally for the Pole in his debut season in Australia.

Coach of Season

ERNIE MERRICK (Newcastle Jets)
Graham Arnold might disagree, but turning the Jets into Grand Finalists was the season's best performance.

Newcomer of Season

DANIEL ARZANI (Melbourne City)
The winger of Iranian heritage dazzled with his close control and his ability to beat an opponent.

5-0 to secure the league title for a seventh consecutive season.

Tuesday May 1

SPAIN: Real Madrid become the first club to reach three European Cup Finals in a row for the second time by beating Bayern Munich on aggregate in the Champions League semi-finals.

Wednesday May 2

ENGLAND: Liverpool reach the Champions League Final for the first time since 2007, advancing 7-6 on aggregate despite losing 4-2 in the second leg at Roma.
LIECHTENSTEIN: Vaduz beat Balzers 3-0 to extend their record to 46 domestic cup wins.

Thursday May 3

EUROPA LEAGUE: Although they lose 2-1 on the night, Rolando's extra-time goal gives Marseille a 3-2 victory over Red Bull Salzburg. They face Atletico Madrid – who knocked out Arsenal – in the Final.
KENYA: Sebastien Migne, who quit as coach of Congo in March, takes charge of Kenya's national side.
TURKEY: Besiktas refuse to turn up for the resumption of their Turkish Cup semi-final second leg at Fenerbahce and are banned from next season's competition.

Friday May 4

SCOTLAND: Former England and Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard is appointed manager of Rangers.
SOUTH AFRICA: Luyanda Ntshangase, a 21-year-old striker with top-flight side Maritzburg United, dies in hospital, having been in an induced coma since he was struck by lightning during a friendly match on March 1.
SPAIN: Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone is handed a four-game ban after being sent off against Arsenal and will have to watch the Europa League Final against Marseille from the stands.

Saturday May 5

ENGLAND: Former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson undergoes emergency surgery after a brain haemorrhage.
URUGUAY: Nacional are crowned Apertura champions with a 2-1 victory at Danube.

Sunday May 6

AUSTRALIA: Melbourne Victory are the first club to win four A-League titles, beating Newcastle Jets 1-0 in the Grand Final.
SPAIN: Real Madrid draw 2-2 at ➤

➤ Barcelona in *El Clasico*.

Tuesday May 8

FRANCE: It is confirmed that defender Laurent Koscielny has ruptured an Achilles and will miss the World Cup. Paris Saint-Germain seal the domestic treble with a 2-0 victory over third-tier Les Herbiers in the French Cup Final.

Wednesday May 9

ARGENTINA: Boca Juniors are back-to-back league champions for the first time in more than a decade as a 2-2 draw at Gimnasia La Plata secures a 33rd title.

Thursday May 10

GREECE: Spanish referee David Borbalan will take charge of the Greek Cup Final between AEK and PAOK in a bid to rebuild the game's tarnished reputation in the country.
TURKEY: Arda Turan, who is on a two-and-a-half-season loan with Istanbul Basaksehir from Barcelona, is banned for 16 games for pushing an assistant referee.

Friday May 11

BRAZIL: Dani Alves is ruled out of the World Cup after injuring the cruciate ligament in his right knee.
FRANCE: Three days after playing in the French Cup Final, Les Herbiers lose 4-1 at Beziers and are relegated to the fourth division.
ITALY: The Italian federation rules that Serie A clubs will be allowed to field reserve teams in the third tier from next season.

Saturday May 12

GERMANY: Despite beating Borussia Monchengladbach 2-1, Hamburg are relegated for the first time in their history as Wolfsburg win 4-1 at home to Cologne.
GREECE: PAOK players celebrate beating AEK 2-0 in the Greek Cup Final by wearing masks bearing the likeness of the club's owner, Ivan Savvidis, who was banned for going onto a pitch with a holstered pistol two months ago.

Sunday May 13

NEW ZEALAND: Team Wellington thrash Lautoka of Fiji 6-0 in their home leg of the OFC Champions League Final.
RUSSIA: Italian coach Roberto Mancini has his contract with Zenit terminated by mutual consent.
SPAIN: Barcelona's hopes of going a whole La Liga season unbeaten end in their penultimate game as they lose 5-4 at Levante.
TUNISIA: Club Africain win their 13th Tunisian Cup, beating Etoile du Sahel 4-1 in the Final.

Six up...Team Wellington take charge

Monday May 14

FRANCE: Out of work since leaving Borussia Dortmund in May 2017, Paris Saint-Germain appoint Thomas Tuchel as their new coach.
ISRAEL: Beitar Jerusalem change their name to Beitar Trump Jerusalem after US president Donald Trump moves his country's embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, although reports suggest the club will require Israeli FA approval.
LIBYA: Algerian-born coach Adel Amrouche takes charge of Libya's national team.

Tuesday May 15

BELARUS: Diego Maradona is appointed chairman of Belarusian Premier League side Dinamo Brest.
EGYPT: Al Ahly coach Hossam El Badry resigns after a 2-0 loss to Uganda's Kampala City Council Authority in the CAF Champions League. Zamalek beat Smouha on penalties to win the Egyptian Cup.
ENGLAND: Former Aston Villa and England under-21 defender Jlloyd Samuel, who was capped at senior level by Trinidad & Tobago, is killed in a car crash, aged 37.
GERMANY: Joachim Low agrees to extend his contract as coach of the national side to 2022. Mario Gotze, who scored the winner in the 2014 Final, is left out of Low's squad for the World Cup.

Wednesday May 16

AUSTRALIA: Sydney assistant coach Steve Corica will replace Graham Arnold when he leaves to take charge of the national side

AFC Champions League

JOHN DUERDEN

Big guns crash out

Tianjin shock CSL rivals Guangzhou Evergrande

The build-up to the World Cup may have dominated the Asian landscape in May, but there was still plenty to talk about in the AFC Champions League. Not least the disappointing performances of clubs from China, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Guangzhou Evergrande and Shanghai SIPG were the biggest names to exit in the round of 16.

Tianjin Quanjian twice came from behind to draw 2-2 at two-time winners Guangzhou Evergrande and go through on away goals after a goalless first leg, with defeat increasing the pressure on Fabio Cannavaro, who took over from Luiz Felipe Scolari at Guangzhou at the end of last season after steering Tianjin into the Champions League for the first time.

"Tianjin Quanjian's sense of hunger in these two games was a lot stronger than ours," said the Italian. "Many of their players were playing in the second division 18 months ago."

Top of the Chinese Super League, Shanghai SIPG exited the continental competition despite Brazilian striker Hulk returning from injury to score twice against Kashima Antlers. Though they lost the second leg 2-1, the Japanese side went through 4-3 on aggregate and now meet Tianjin in the quarter-finals.

West Asian teams have only lifted the trophy once since 2005, but the last four Finals have seen a finalist from either Saudi Arabia or the UAE. That, however, won't be the case this time as teams from those two countries have fallen by the wayside.

Riyadh giants Al Hilal, who were runners-up last year and in 2014, didn't even make it out of the group stage, while Al Ahli went out in the last 16 to Qatari side Al Sadd, for whom Baghdad Bounedjah is the tournament's joint-top scorer with nine goals, along with Youssef El Arabi of Qatar's Al Duhail.

The two Qatari sides will both face Iranian opposition in the last eight, in August, after Mame Thiam scored a hat-trick as Esteghlal overturned a 1-0 first-leg deficit to beat fellow Iranian club Zob Ahan 3-2 on aggregate, and Persepolis beat UAE's Al

after the World Cup.
ENGLAND: Everton sack manager Sam Allardyce, while David Moyes leaves West Ham United. Ray Wilson, a member of England's 1966 World Cup-winning side, dies.
GERMANY: RB Leipzig and coach Ralph Hasenhuttl part company. Eintracht Frankfurt announce that Adi Hutter of Swiss champions Young Boys will replace Niko Kovac at the end of the season.
HOLLAND: PSV director of football Marcel Brands leaves the club to take up a similar role at Everton.
SPAIN: Antoine Griezmann scores twice as Atletico Madrid beat Marseille 3-0 to win the Europa League for a third time.

Thursday May 17

ENGLAND: Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola signs a contract extension that will keep him at the club until 2021.
FRANCE: Claudio Ranieri says he will stand down as Nantes coach at the end of the season.

Friday May 18

BANGLADESH: England's Jamie Day is appointed national coach.
BELGIUM: Roberto Martinez, whose contract as coach was due to finish at the end of the World Cup, signs a two-year extension.
ENGLAND: Relegated teams Stoke City and Swansea City part company with Paul Lambert and Carlos Carvalhal respectively, while West Bromwich Albion give the job to interim boss Darren Moore. Ex-England manager Steve McClaren takes charge of their Championship rivals QPR.
ITALY: Parma beat Spezia 2-0 and return to Serie A with a third successive promotion since the club were declared bankrupt.
MYANMAR: Antoine Hey of Germany is named national coach.

Saturday May 19

ENGLAND: In a repeat of the first FA Cup Final at the new Wembley 11 years ago, Chelsea beat Manchester United 1-0.
GERMANY: Eintracht Frankfurt shock Bayern Munich to win 3-1 in the German Cup Final.
SCOTLAND: Celtic beat Motherwell 2-0 in the Scottish Cup Final and achieve a first-ever back-to-back domestic treble.

Farewell....Fernando Torres finds the net on his last appearance for Atletico Madrid

Sunday May 20

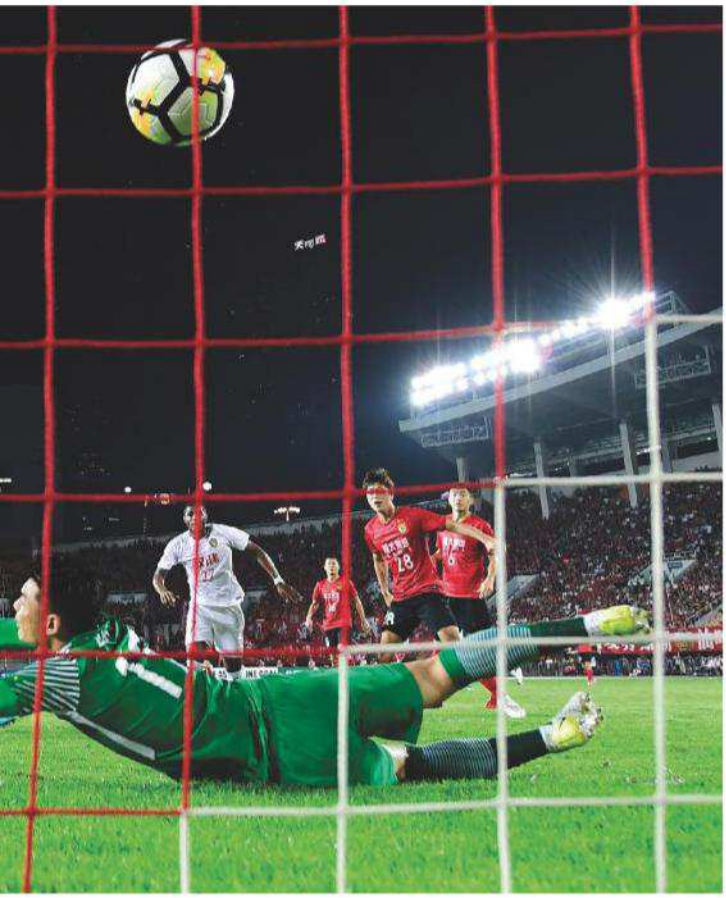
POLAND: Legia are awarded a 3-0 victory and secure the title as their game at Lech Poznan is abandoned following crowd trouble with the visitors leading 2-0.
SPAIN: Fernando Torres scores twice in his final game for Atletico Madrid as they draw 2-2 with Eibar.

Monday May 21

BELGIUM: Roma midfielder Radja Nainggolan retires from international football after being left out of the World Cup squad.
USA: Zlatan Ibrahimovic is sent off during LA Galaxy's 1-0 win at Montreal Impact.

Tuesday May 22

ENGLAND: Manuel Pellegrini leaves CSL side Hebei China Fortune to take charge of West Ham United.
GERMANY: Borussia Dortmund appoint a new coach in Lucien Favre, who left Nice at the end of the Ligue 1 season.
SPAIN: Huesca reach La Liga for ➤


Opener... Alexandre Pato (far left) scores Tianjin Quanjian's first goal against Guangzhou Evergrande

Goals...Youssef El Arabi of Al Duhail

Jazira on away goals with a last-minute equaliser from captain Seyed Jalal Hosseini.

And there will definitely be a South Korean side in the semi-finals after Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors were drawn to play Suwon Samsung Bluewings, who beat another South Korean side, Ulsan Hyundai, 3-0 at home to progress 3-1 on aggregate.

Jeonbuk, who won the title in 2016 but were banned from defending their crown last year following a bribery scandal, look capable of winning a third title after overcoming Buriram United 4-3 on aggregate.

After securing their place in the last eight, Jeonbuk coach Choi Kang-hee – who led the club to the title in 2006 and last year – said: "Our goal was to join the top-ranked teams by qualifying for the quarter-finals so we have achieved our first goal. We were focused only on this match, not looking ahead to the quarter- or semi-finals. We lost the away match but we are always proud to win at home against strong teams.

"We have had a tight schedule in the first half of the season but now we have some time to prepare the team for the quarter-finals. We will improve our teamwork and hope that the injured players recover as soon as possible."

The vast distances involved, an absence of an away-travel culture in many countries and playing games in midweek are all problems for the AFC Champions League. But opening up the competition to more nations could make a difference as there are plenty of teams in south-east Asia that would bring fans and passion to the party.

The 2018 edition has yet to take off, and with attendances falling the tournament needs an injection of freshness and excitement on and off the pitch. WS

➤ the first time in their history after beating Lugo 2-0.
UKRAINE: Thirty-five Ukrainian clubs, including five in the country's top flight, are accused of being involved in a match-fixing operation.

Wednesday May 23

ENGLAND: Unai Emery becomes Arsenal's first new manager in almost 22 years.
ITALY: Napoli replace coach Maurizio Sarri with Carlo Ancelotti.

Thursday May 24

JAPAN: Andres Iniesta leaves Barcelona and joins Vissel Kobe.
ZAMBIA: National coach Wedson Nyirenda resigns ahead of the COSAFA Cup, which gets underway on Sunday.

Friday May 25

QATAR: Former Spain midfielder Xavi signs a two-year contract extension with Al Sadd.

Saturday May 26

ENGLAND: Fulham return to the Premier League after beating Aston Villa 1-0 in the play-off Final.
SPAIN: Real Madrid beat Liverpool 3-1 to win a third consecutive Champions League title.

Monday May 28

FRANCE: Olivier Giroud gets his 31st international goal for France as they beat the Republic of Ireland 2-0, putting him level with Zinedine Zidane as *Les Bleus*' fourth-highest scorer of all time.
ITALY: Mario Balotelli marks his first international appearance for four years with a goal as Italy beat Saudi Arabia 2-1 in Roberto Mancini's debut as *Azzurri* coach.
SPAIN: Sevilla appoint Pablo Machin as coach after he led Girona to 10th place in La Liga.

Tuesday May 29

ARGENTINA: Lionel Messi grabs a hat-trick as Argentina beat Haiti 4-0 in a friendly.
USA: Cincinnati will join MLS next year as it expands to 26 teams.

Wednesday May 30

EGYPT: The national team's doctor says Mohamed Salah, who injured his shoulder playing for Liverpool in the Champions League Final, will be fit to play in Egypt's World Cup campaign and is confident that the striker's absence "will not exceed" three weeks.
ENGLAND: Aston Villa captain John Terry leaves the club after their loss to Fulham in the play- ➤

Libertadores Cup

TIM VICKERY

Big two dominate

Twelve of the last 16 teams are from Argentina or Brazil

Last year the Libertadores Cup was transformed, running from January until the end of November instead of being restricted to the first half of the year. And with CONMEBOL in financial problems following the FIFAgate scandal, extra slots were made available to clubs from Argentina and Brazil in a bid to increase revenue from the sale of broadcasting rights.

The consequences were felt as Gremio and Lanus fought out the first Brazil versus Argentina Final for five years. And they are clearer still after this year's group phase. Brazil's Vasco da Gama were the only team from the big two to fail to make the cut, and of the 16 clubs who made the knockout phase, only four are not from Argentina or Brazil.

As a general rule, the Brazilian sides won their groups, with those from Argentina coming second.

For some it was a near thing – especially Estudiantes, who needed to beat Nacional of Uruguay by a two-goal margin to make it through and were a goal down at the interval. They hit back to score three – the last coming from a controversial 89th-minute penalty – to book their place and end Uruguayan interest.

It is the first time since 2012 that there is no Uruguayan side in the knockout phase, while Peru are more accustomed to wipe-outs – this was their fifth consecutive failure – and Venezuela lost all of its representatives for the eighth time in nine years. Also drawing a blank were Bolivia and Ecuador, whose Emelec were one of the big disappointments of the group phase.

Chile, meanwhile, got a team through for the first time in four years, although Colo Colo were hardly impressive. But their last day, goalless draw in Colombia with 2016 champions Atletico Nacional was good enough to take both sides into the last 16. Theirs was the only group with no representation from either Brazil or Argentina.

Outside the continent's big two, only one other country managed to accumulate more victories than defeats. That was Paraguay, for whom Cerro Porteno and Libertad both qualified in style, with a joint record of eight wins, two draws and two defeats. One of those losses, though, speaks volumes about the way the competition has unfolded so far. Away to reigning champions Gremio, Cerro Porteno were systematically picked apart as they went down 5-0.

Gremio have clearly benefited from the new calendar, with a far shorter gap between winning the title and starting their defence. They have the same coach and essentially the same team – which is highly unusual continuity by the recent standards of the South American club game.

The opening of the European summer transfer window clearly threatens such stability. Gremio, for example, could sell key midfielder Arthur to Barcelona, while compatriots Corinthians have already lost coach Fabio Carille to Al Wehda of Saudi Arabia.

The Argentinian clubs, though, could be vulnerable, since their calendar is now out of sync with that of the

Last gasp...Estudiantes celebrate scoring their late penalty against Nacional

Through...Atletico Nacional (in green) and Colo Colo

Argentinian clubs could be vulnerable since their calendar is now out of sync with that of the Libertadores

Libertadores. Most South American countries, if they have not already done so, are switching to a February-to-December season. But Argentina continue to follow the European model. The domestic season ended in May, leaving many players out of contract and ensuring there will be plenty of changes when the Libertadores resumes in August.

And there will be little time or opportunity to bed in the changes. By the time the knockout rounds get underway, the new Argentinian season will not have kicked off – so their teams will be short of match practice while the Brazilians will be in mid season and should therefore enjoy a physical advantage.

But it is always a mistake to take anything for granted in the Libertadores. In comparison with the Champions League, the South American version is far less predictable. Two years ago, for example, tiny Independiente del Valle from Ecuador knocked out a sequence of giants and made it all the way to the Final, where they were narrowly beaten.

But, for the moment, the new-look Libertadores seems destined to be dominated by the continent's big two of Argentina and Brazil, with the latter providing most of the favourites. WS

➤ offs at the weekend and failure to gain promotion.

Thursday May 31

ENGLAND: Former Chelsea and England midfielder Frank Lampard is named manager of Derby County, replacing Gary Rowett who left for Championship rivals Stoke City. Everton appoint Marco Silva.
PERU: National skipper Paolo Guerrero, who tested positive for cocaine in October, is cleared to play at the World Cup after CAS agree to temporarily lift a 14-month suspension while it considers the 34-year-old striker's appeal.
SPAIN: Zinedine Zidane steps down as coach of Real Madrid days after the club won a third successive Champions League. Athletic Bilbao appoint ex-Sevilla boss Eduardo Berizzo as their new coach.

Friday June 1

CZECH REPUBLIC: A 4-0 loss to Australia is the biggest defeat in the history of the Czech Republic.
RUSSIA: Grigory Rodchenkov, the former director of the country's national anti-doping laboratory turned whistle-blower, says one of Russia's World Cup squad is a drugs cheat who is on a list of 34 players that he helped cover up.

Saturday June 2

AUSTRIA: In a game that is delayed for 100 minutes due to rain, Austria beat Germany for the first time since 1986, winning 2-1 to equal a national record of seven successive international victories.
BELGIUM: Jan Vertonghen is the first player to make 100 senior appearances for Belgium as they draw 0-0 with Portugal.
SPAIN: Leganes appoint former Southampton boss Mauricio Pellegrino as coach.
USA: Josef Martinez scores all three goals in Atlanta United's 3-1 victory over Philadelphia Union, equalling the MLS hat-trick record with his fifth treble.

Sunday June 3

SPAIN: Fresh from leading Huesca to La Liga, Rubi is appointed coach of Espanyol.

Monday June 4

ENGLAND: Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola is suspended for two Champions League matches, with one deferred for a year, after being sent off at half-time for complaining about a decision in his side's quarter-final second leg against Liverpool at Etihad Stadium in the ➤

➤ quarter-final second leg against Liverpool at the Etihad Stadium in April.

GUYANA: Former Birmingham City and Derby County defender Michael Johnson, who was capped 13 times by Jamaica, is appointed coach of Guyana's national team.

Tuesday June 5

ARGENTINA: Saturday's friendly against Israel, which was due to be played in Jerusalem, is cancelled due to political pressure.

SAUDI ARABIA: Al Hilal appoint Jorge Jesus as coach after the 63-year-old parts company with Lisbon club Sporting.

Wednesday June 6

BOLIVIA: Jorge Wilstermann are Apertura champions after beating The Strongest on penalties. The two sides drew 3-3 on aggregate over two legs and then played out a 2-2 draw at a neutral venue.

CROATIA: After being found guilty of stealing millions of euros in transfer fees when he was chief executive at Dinamo Zagreb, Zdravko Mamic is sentenced to six-and-a-half years in prison. On the eve of the verdict he fled across the Croat border into Bosnia.

Thursday June 7

ENGLAND: Trent Alexander-Arnold and goalkeeper Nick Pope, who is a second-half substitute, make their debuts as England beat Costa Rica 2-0 at Elland Road.

ITALY: Juventus pay Bayern Munich €40million to make Douglas Costa's loan deal permanent.

RUSSIA: Second-tier side Dynamo Saint Petersburg will move to the Fisht Stadium, the World Cup arena in Sochi, next season and are likely to be renamed FC Sochi.

SPAIN: Girona announce their new coach is Eusebio Sacristan, who was sacked by Real Sociedad in March. Eric Abidal becomes Barcelona's sporting director.

Friday June 8

ENGLAND: Premier League clubs will have a winter break in February from the 2019-20 season.

SCOTLAND: Promoted St Mirren appoint former Hibernian boss Alan Stubbs as their new manager.

Saturday June 9

ARGENTINA: River Plate midfielder Enzo Perez is called up to replace the injured Manuel Lanzini in the World Cup squad.

COLOMBIA: Deportes Tolima win the Apertura, beating Atletico ➤

CONCACAF Champions League

MARTIN DEL PALACIO LANGER

Mexico on top again

Guadalajara's lucky 13

This year should have been remembered as the year MLS finally managed to shake off the dominance of Liga MX in the CONCACAF Champions League. As the tournament progressed, US and Canadian teams made things extremely difficult for their Mexican counterparts, and when Toronto met Guadalajara in the Final it was the Canadians who were clear favourites.

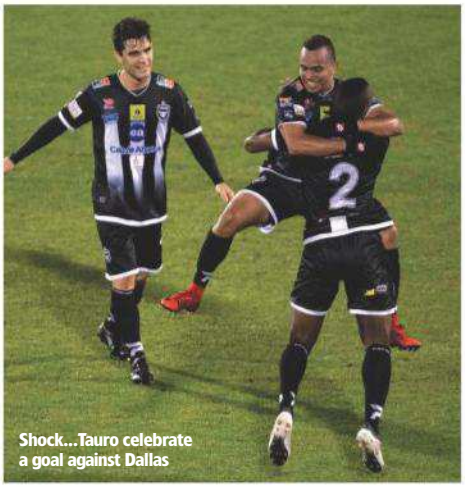
However, for the 13th time in a row, it wasn't meant to be. When all was said and done, it was yet again a Mexican side that emerged victorious, prolonging the longest streak of continental dominance by a country in the recent history of the game.

The tournament started with a change of format. Instead of the usual group phase, for the first time CONCACAF decided to jump directly to the knockout round, seeding the 16 teams into two pots based on their performances in the competition in the past and preventing teams from facing another from their own country for the first two rounds.

The results were very encouraging as some of the favourites were pushed to the limit in the first round, with Dallas surprisingly beaten by Panama's Tauro.

In the end, however, it came down to the usual suspects as four Liga MX teams and three MLS sides qualified to the quarter-finals. This set-up three series between teams from the two leagues – and the sides from further north prevailed in two of them.

Since the draw was made, it was clear that the face off between MLS champions Toronto and Tigres, the Mexican champions, was going to be the most exciting one, featuring present or former internationals from several countries, including French striker Andre-Pierre Gignac for the Mexicans and Italy's Sebastian Giovinco for the Canadians.



Shock...Tauro celebrate a goal against Dallas

Yet again a Mexican side emerged victorious, prolonging the longest streak of continental dominance by a country in the recent history of the game

It was believed that Tigres, who have the biggest payroll in the region, would have the upper hand but they yet again disappointed in a tournament that they have never managed to win despite dominating Liga MX in the past few years. While Toronto advanced on the away-goals rule, the tie was far less close than the 5-5 aggregate result indicates.

In the other two matches, Mexico's Tijuana wasted chance after chance and ended up humiliated by New York Red Bulls, while Guadalajara salvaged Mexican pride by overturning a 1-0 deficit in Seattle by easily dispatching the US side 3-0 on home soil.

With Mexico's Club America effortlessly disposing of Tauro, another high-profile clash was set up when they faced Toronto. Once again the Mexicans were considered favourites, but once more the Canadians prevailed, making the most of an inspired performance by Giovinco and Jozy Altidore for a 3-1 first-leg victory

Defiant...Guadalajara keep out Toronto's Nicolas Hasler

Winners... Guadalajara

that their rivals were unable to overturn in the return at the Azteca Stadium.

Toronto's opponents in the Final were Guadalajara, who scraped through against NYRB and were having a nightmare of a season in Liga MX. Even the Mexican media considered the Canadians heavy favourites in the first leg in Toronto and they were genuinely shocked when their team returned home with an impressive 2-1 victory, courtesy of goals by Mexican internationals Rodolfo Pizarro and Alan Pulido.

However, there was still a story to be told, and the showdown at the Estadio Omnilife saw a valiant Canadian side equalise the aggregate score and send the tie to a penalty shoot-out. But in front of a delirious support, the hosts managed to lift the trophy for the first time in their history by making no mistake from the spot, while Jonathan Osorio and Michael Bradley missed for Toronto.

While this year's Final may have felt like a great opportunity wasted for MLS, the performances of the league's teams clearly shows that the gap between the US and Mexico is closer than ever – and that the Aztec winning streak will surely come to an end sometime soon. WS

➤ Nacional on penalties after a 2-2 draw on aggregate.

ENGLAND: A 2-1 win over Mexico gives England their third successive triumph at the Toulon Tournament.

IRAN: Former Wales boss John Toshack signs a three-year deal to coach Tractor Sazi.

SERBIA: Aleksandar Mitrovic scores a hat-trick as Serbia beat Bolivia 5-1 in Austria.

UGANDA: Vipers are denied a domestic double as they lose 1-0 to KCCA in the cup Final.

ZIMBABWE: Khama Billiat scores twice as Zimbabwe retain the COSAFA Cup with a 4-2 victory over Zambia in extra time.

Sunday June 10

CHINA: Former Wales and Sunderland boss Chris Coleman is named coach of Hebei China Fortune on his 48th birthday.

INDIA: Sunil Chhetri scores both goals as India beat Kenya 2-0 to win the Intercontinental Cup.

URUGUAY: Nacional come from two goals down to beat Torque 3-2 in the Torneo Intermedio Final.

Monday June 11

ARGENTINA: Lionel Messi says the future of his international career will depend on how Argentina do at the World Cup.

ENGLAND: Ostersund coach Graham Potter quits the Swedish club to take charge of Swansea City.

FRANCE: Patrick Vieira leaves New York City to become coach of Nice and is replaced at the MLS club by Domenec Torrent.

GHANA: Former Ghana Football Association president Kwesi Nyantakyi resigns from posts with FIFA and CAF after he was filmed accepting a "cash gift" of $65,000 from an undercover reporter pretending to be a businessman keen to invest in Ghanaian football.

Tuesday June 12

SPAIN: Real Madrid announce that national coach Julen Lopetegui will replace Zinedine Zidane.

Wednesday June 13

FIFA: Canada, Mexico and the United States will host the 2026 World Cup after receiving 134 votes at the FIFA Congress in Moscow.

SPAIN: Two days before their opening World Cup game against Portugal, Spain sack coach Julen Lopetegui because he had agreed to join Real Madrid "without any information to the RFEF". Sporting director Fernando Hierro will take over for the tournament. WS

ESM XI

EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

HOW IT WORKS Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/esm11

SEASON RANKINGS Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Marc-Andre TER STEGEN (Barcelona)	27
David DE GEA (Manchester United)	26
Jan OBLAK (Atletico Madrid)	16
ALISSON (Roma)	11
EDERSON (Manchester City)	10
Keylor NAVAS (Real Madrid)	8
Thibaut COURTOIS (Chelsea)	3
Samir HANDANOVIC (Internazionale)	3
Iker CASILLAS (Porto)	2
Gianluigi DONNARUMMA (Milan)	2
Alphonse AREOLA (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
NETO (Valencia)	1
Rui PATRICIO (Sporting)	1
Wojicech SZCZESNY (Juventus)	1
Sven ULREICH (Bayern Munich)	1

DEFENDERS

Jordi ALBA (Barcelona)	26
MARCELO (Real Madrid)	26
Nicolas OTAMENDI (Manchester City)	24
Joshua KIMMICH (Bayern Munich)	22
Gerard PIQUE (Barcelona)	20
Kyle WALKER (Manchester City)	20
Kalidou KOULIBALY (Napoli)	17
Giorgio CHIELLINI (Juventus)	15
Sergio RAMOS (Real Madrid)	15
Mats HUMMELS (Bayern Munich)	12
Samuel UMTITI (Barcelona)	12
Diego GODIN (Atletico Madrid)	11
Milan SKRINIAR (Internazionale)	11
DANI ALVES (Paris Saint-Germain)	10
Marcos ALONSO (Chelsea)	7
Jerome BOATENG (Bayern Munich)	7
John STONES (Manchester City)	7
Faouzi GHOULAM (Napoli)	6
Raphael VARANE (Real Madrid)	6
ALEX SANDRO (Juventus)	5
Davide CALABRIA (Milan)	5
Thomas MEUNIER (Paris Saint-Germain)	5
Nelson SEMEDO (Barcelona)	5
Antonio VALENCIA (Manchester United)	5
Mehdi BENATIA (Juventus)	4
Aleksandar KOLAROV (Roma)	4
Layvin KURZAWA (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
Kostas MANOLAS (Roma)	4
MARQUINHOS (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
NALDO (Schalke)	4
Sergi ROBERTO (Barcelona)	4
Andrew ROBERTSON (Liverpool)	4
THIAGO SILVA (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
Virgil VAN DIJK (Liverpool)	4
David ALABA (Bayern Munich)	3
Marc BARTRA (Borussia Dortmund/Real Betis)	3
Hector BELLERIN (Arsenal)	3
Andreas CHRISTENSEN (Chelsea)	3
Jose GAYA (Valencia)	3
Chris SMALLING (Manchester United)	3
Alex TELLES (Porto)	3
Trent ALEXANDER-ARNOLD (Liverpool)	2
Cesar AZPILICUETA (Chelsea)	2
Jose GIMENEZ (Atletico Madrid)	2
Andreas GRANQVIST (Krasnodar)	2
Thilo KEHLER (Schalke)	2
Dejan LOVREN (Liverpool)	2
MARCELO (Lyon)	2
Philipp MAX (Augsburg)	2
Sokratis PAPASTATHOPOULOS (B D'mund)	2
Antonio RUDIGER (Chelsea)	2
Manuel AKANJI (Basle/Borussia Dortmund)	1
Raul ALBIOL (Napoli)	1
Santiago ARIAS (PSV)	1
Antonin BARAK (Udinese)	1
Antonio BARRAGAN (Real Betis)	1
Duje CALETA-CAR (Red Bull Salzburg)	1
Dani CARVAJAL (Real Madrid)	1
Joao CANCELO (Internazionale)	1
DANTE (Nice)	1
Ben DAVIES (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Matthijs DE LIGT (Ajax)	1
Stefan DE VRIJ (Lazio)	1
Mathieu DEBUCHY (Saint-Etienne)	1
FILIPE LUIS (Atletico Madrid)	1
Alessandro FLORENZI (Roma)	1
Lucas HERNANDEZ (Atletico Madrid)	1
JARDEL (Benfica)	1
Phil JONES (Manchester United)	1
Sead KOLASINAC (Arsenal)	1
Aleksandar KOLAROV (Roma)	1
MARCELO (Lyon)	1
Andrea MASIELLO (Atalanta)	1
Jeremy MATHIEU (Sporting)	1
Ferland MENDY (Lyon)	1
Gabriel MERCADO (Sevilla)	1
Nacho MONREAL (Arsenal)	1
Lukasz PISZCZEK (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Alessio ROMAGNOLI (Milan)	1
Salif SANE (Hanover)	1
Djibril SIDIBE (Monaco)	1
Nevan SUBOTIC (Saint-Etienne)	1
Jonathan TAH (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Thomas VERMAELEN (Barcelona)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Kevin DE BRUYNE (Manchester City)	63
David SILVA (Manchester City)	14
Christian ERIKSEN (Tottenham Hotspur)	13
Andres INIESTA (Barcelona)	13
Leroy SANE (Manchester City)	11
Sergio BUSQUETS (Barcelona)	9
Leon BAILEY (Bayer Leverkusen)	8
Luka MODRIC (Real Madrid)	8
James RODRIGUEZ (Bayern Munich)	8
CASEMIRO (Real Madrid)	7
Philippe COUTINHO (Liverpool/Barcelona)	7
ISCO (Real Madrid)	6
Angel DI MARIA (Paris Saint-Germain)	5
Goncalo GUEDES (Valencia)	5
Marek HAMSIK (Napoli)	5
Eden HAZARD (Chelsea)	5
N'Golo KANTE (Chelsea)	4
Nemanja MATIC (Manchester United)	4
Sergej MILINKOVIC-SAVIC (Lazio)	4
Florian THAUVIN (Marseille)	4
WILLIAN (Chelsea)	4
ALLAN (Napoli)	3
JORGINHO (Napoli)	3
Geoffrey KONDOGBIA (Valencia)	3
Mesut OZIL (Arsenal)	3
Dimitri PAYET (Marseille)	3
Paul POGBA (Manchester United)	3
Adrien RABIOT (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
Nuri SAHIN (Borussia Dortmund)	3
Marco VERRATTI (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
CENGIZ Under (Roma)	2
Ilkay GUNDOGAN (Manchester City)	2
KOKE (Atletico Madrid)	2
Toni KROOS (Real Madrid)	2
Blaise MATUIDI (Juventus)	2
Thomas MULLER (Bayern Munich)	2
Dani PAREJO (Valencia)	2
PAULINHO (Barcelona)	2
Ivan RAKITIC (Barcelona)	2

TEAM OF THE SEASON
(based on appearances in Team of the Month)

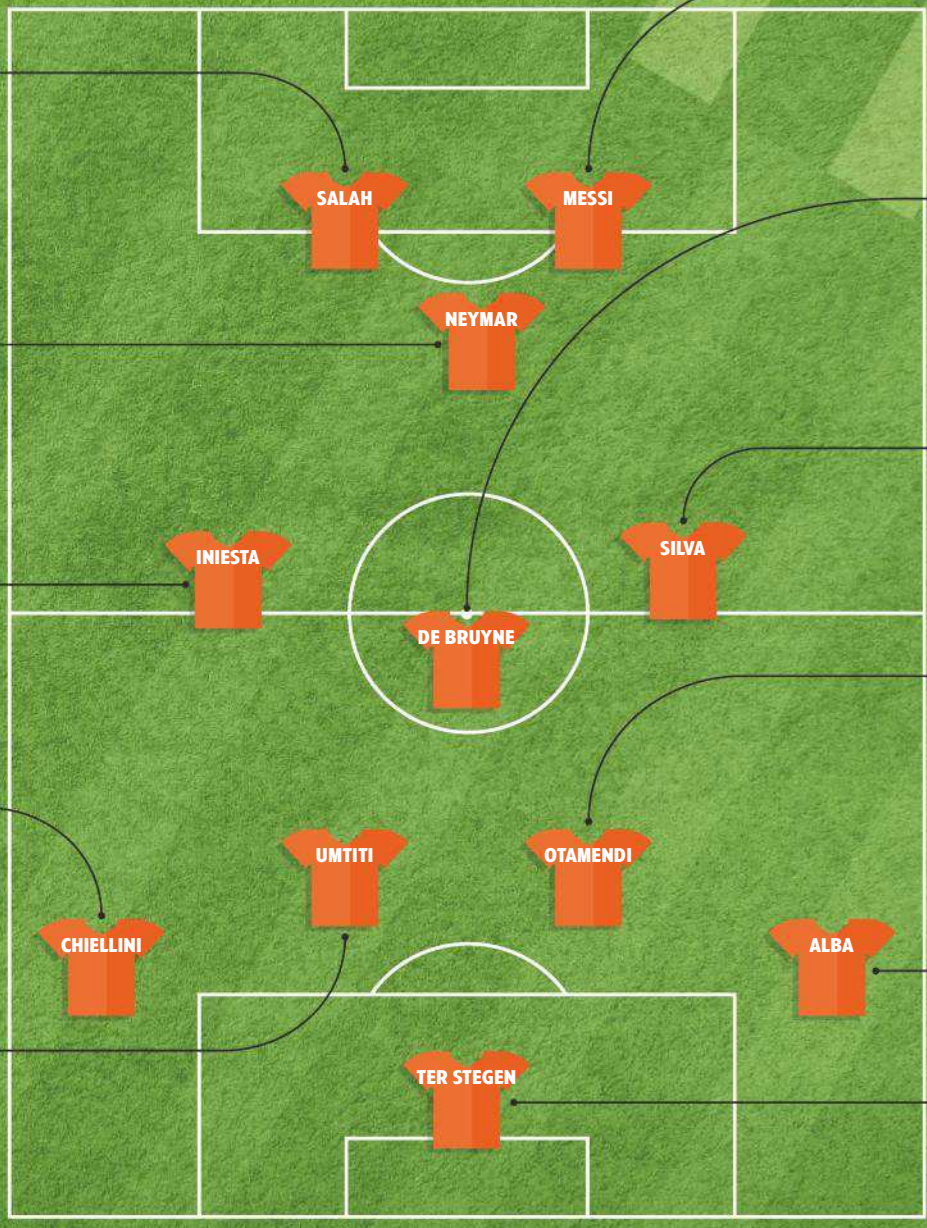
Mohamed Salah
Liverpool
●●●●●

Neymar
Paris Saint-Germain
●●

Andres Iniesta
Barcelona
●●

Giorgio Chiellini
Juventus
●●●

Samuel Umtiti
Barcelona
●●●

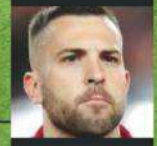


Lionel Messi
Barcelona
●●●●●●●●

Kevin De Bruyne
Manchester City
●●●●●●●

David Silva
Manchester City
●●

Nicolas Otamendi
Manchester City
●●●


Jordi Alba
Barcelona
●●●●●

Marc-Andre Ter Stegen
Barcelona
●●●

Marco REUS (Borussia Dortmund)	2
SAUL Niguez (Atletico Madrid)	2
SON Heung-min (Tottenham Hotspur)	2
Corentin TOLISSO (Bayern Munich)	2
Lucas VAZQUEZ (Real Madrid)	2
Dele ALLI (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Emre CAN (Liverpool)	1
Samu CASTILLEJO (Villarreal)	1
Douglas COSTA (Juventus)	1
DANILO (Porto)	1
Daniele DE ROSSI (Roma)	1
Mousa DEMBELE (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
FABINHO (Monaco)	1
Marouane FELLAINI (Manchester United)	1
Bruno FERNANDES (Sporting)	1
FERNANDINHO (Manchester City)	1
Alejandro GOMEZ (Atalanta)	1
Ibai GOMEZ (Alaves)	1
Luiz GUSTAVO (Marseille)	1
Jordan HENDERSON (Liverpool)	1

Lewis HOLTBY (Hamburg)	1
Naby KEITA (RB Leipzig)	1
Sami KHEDIRA (Juventus)	1
Ademola LOOKMAN (RB Leipzig)	1
Yunus MALLI (Wolfsburg)	1
James MILNER (Liverpool)	1
Andreas PEREIRA (Valencia)	1
Gaston PEREIRO (PSV)	1
Ivan PERISIC (Internazionale)	1
Maximilian PHILIPP (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Miroslav PJANIC (Juventus)	1
Alassane PLEA (Nice)	1
PORTU (Girona)	1
Christian PULISIC (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Bernardo SILVA (Manchester City)	1
TALISCA (Besiktas)	1
THIAGO Alcantara (Bayern Munich)	1
Arturo VIDAL (Bayern Munich)	1
Ruud VORMER (Club Brugge)	1

FORWARDS

Lionel MESSI (Barcelona)	66
Mohamed SALAH (Liverpool)	52
Harry KANE (Tottenham Hotspur)	26
NEYMAR (Paris Saint-Germain)	25
Cristiano RONALDO (Real Madrid)	23
Edinson CAVANI (Paris Saint-Germain)	18
Antoine GRIEZMANN (Atletico Madrid)	16
Sergio AGUERO (Manchester City)	14
Paulo DYBALA (Juventus)	13
Gareth BALE (Real Madrid)	9
Mauro ICARDI (Internazionale)	9
Ciro IMMOBILE (Lazio)	9
Romelu LUKAKU (Manchester United)	9
Raheem STERLING (Manchester City)	7
Luis SUAREZ (Barcelona)	7
Roberto FIRMINO (Liverpool)	6
Lorenzo INSIGNE (Napoli)	6
Robert LEWANDOWSKI (Bayern Munich)	6
Dries MERTENS (Napoli)	6

Sadio MANE (Liverpool)	5
Karim BENZEMA (Real Madrid)	4
Timo WERNER (RB Leipzig)	4
Nabil FEKIR (Lyon)	3
JONAS (Benfica)	3
Kylian MBAPPE (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
P-Emerick AUBAMEYANG (D'mundArsenal)	2
Radamel FALCAO (Monaco)	2
Ante REBIC (Eintracht Frankfurt)	2
Carloa BACCA (Villarreal)	1
Cedric BAKUMBU (Villarreal)	1
Wissam BEN YEDDER (Sevilla)	1
Federico CHIESA (Fiorentina)	1
Patrick CUTRONE (Milan)	1
Memphis DEPAY (Lyon)	1
Bas DOST (Sporting)	1
Olivier GIROUD (Arsenal/Chelsea)	1
Gabriel JESUS (Manchester City)	1
Gonzalo HIGUAIN (Juventus)	1

Club football

EUROPE

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals

1st legs

Apr 3
Juventus (Ita) 0
Real Madrid (Spa) 3 (Cristiano Ronaldo 3, 64, Marcelo 72)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,849. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)
Sent off: Dybala (Juventus) 66

Sevilla (Spa) 1 (Sarabia 31)
Bayern Munich (Ger) 2 (J Navas og 37, Thiago 68)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 40,635. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)

Apr 4
Barcelona (Spa) 4 (De Rossi og 38, Manolas og 55, Pique 59, Suarez 87)
Roma (Ita) 1 (Dzeko 80)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 90,106. **Ref:** Makkelie (Hol)

Liverpool (Eng) 3 (Salah 12, Oxlade-Chamberlain 21, Mane 31)
Manchester City (Eng) 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 50,685. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)

2nd legs

Apr10
Manchester City 1 (Gabriel Jesus 2)
Liverpool 2 (Salah 56, Roberto Firmino 77)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 53,461. **Ref:** Mateu Lahoz (Spa)
Liverpool 5-1 on agg

Roma 3 (Dzeko 6, De Rossi pen 58, Manolas 82)
Barcelona 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 56,580. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)
Agg 4-4; Roma on away goals

Apr11
Bayern Munich 0
Sevilla 0
Att: 70,000. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)
Sent off: Correa (Sevilla) 90+2
Bayern Munich 2-1 on agg

Real Madrid 1 (Cristiano Ronaldo pen 90+8)
Juventus 3 (Mandzukic 2, 37, Matuidi 61)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 75,796. **Ref:** Oliver (Eng)
Sent off: Buffon (Juventus) 90+3
Real Madrid 4-3 on agg

Semi-finals

1st legs

Apr 24
Liverpool 5 (Salah 36, 45+1, Mane 56, Roberto Firmino 61, 69)
Roma 2 (Dzeko 81, Perotti pen 85)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 51,236. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)

Apr 25
Bayern Munich 1 (Kimmich 28)
Real Madrid 2 (Marcelo 44, Marco Asensio 57)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 70,000. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)

2nd legs

May1
Real Madrid 2 (Benzema 11, 46)
Bayern Munich 2 (Kimmich 3, Rodriguez 63)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 77,459. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)
Real Madrid 4-3 on agg

May 2
Roma 4 (Milner og 15, Dzeko 52, Nainggolan 86, pen 90+4)
Liverpool 2 (Mane 9, Wijnaldum 25)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 61,889. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
Liverpool 7-6 on agg

EUROPA LEAGUE

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Apr 5; 2nd legs - Apr12
Arsenal (Eng) v CSKA Moscow (Rus) 4-1, 2-2 (agg 6-3); Atletico Madrid (Spa) v Sporting Lisbon (Por) 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1); Lazio (Ita) v Salzburg (Aut) 4-2, 1-4 (agg 5-6); RB Leipzig (Ger) v Marseille (Fra) 1-0, 2-5 (agg 3-5)

Semi-finals

1st legs - Apr 26; 2nd legs - May 3
Arsenal v Atletico Madrid 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2); Marseille v Salzburg 2-0, 1-2 (aet) (agg 3-2)

Final tables: 2017-18

ALBANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Skenderbeu (C)	36	22	6	8	68	41	72
Kukesi	36	18	9	9	61	41	63
Luftetari	36	16	11	9	47	37	59
Laci	36	16	8	12	45	39	56
Partizani	36	15	8	13	41	36	53
Flamurtari	36	11	13	12	37	37	46
Kamza	36	12	10	14	37	41	46
Teuta	36	12	10	14	55	58	46
Vllaznia (R)	36	12	8	16	38	42	44
Lushnja (R)	36	2	5	29	29	86	11

ANDORRA

Division split after 21-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC S Coloma (C)	27	18	4	5	62	20	58
Engordany	27	16	7	4	50	17	55
Sant Julia	27	14	6	7	64	24	48
Lusitans	27	13	5	9	59	35	44

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UE S Coloma	27	12	5	10	53	29	41
Inter Club	27	10	5	12	45	43	35
Encamp[1]	27	4	2	21	34	88	14
Penya En'a (R)	27	3	2	22	15	126	11

[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

ARMENIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alashkert (C)	30	14	8	8	44	31	50
Banants	30	11	11	8	42	34	44
Gandzasar	30	11	10	9	43	34	43
Shirak[1]	30	14	8	8	37	31	38
Pyunik	30	9	9	12	37	41	36
Ararat	30	5	6	19	33	65	21

[1]12pts deducted for alleged attempted match-fixing by a club official

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salzburg (C)	36	25	8	3	81	29	83
Sturm	36	22	4	10	68	45	70
Rapid	36	17	11	8	68	43	62
LASK	36	17	6	13	49	41	57
Admira	36	15	6	15	59	66	51
Mattersburg	36	12	10	14	50	56	46
Austria	36	12	7	17	51	55	43
Altach	36	10	8	18	35	51	38
Wolfsberger	36	8	9	19	31	57	33
St Polten[1]	36	5	5	26	28	77	20

[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

AZERBAIJAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Qarabag (C)	28	20	5	3	37	13	65
Qabala	28	14	7	7	43	26	49
Neftchi	28	14	4	10	39	28	46
Zira	28	12	8	8	36	30	44
Sumqayit	28	11	7	10	34	33	40
Keshla	28	8	7	13	29	39	31
Sabail	28	6	5	17	19	39	23
Kapaz (R)	28	3	5	20	18	47	14

BELGIUM

REGULAR	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge (Q)	30	20	7	3	68	33	67
Anderlecht (Q)	30	16	7	7	49	42	55
Charleroi (Q)	30	13	12	5	46	30	51
Gent (Q)	30	14	8	8	45	27	50
Genk (Q)	30	11	11	8	44	36	44
Standard (Q)	30	11	11	8	43	41	44
Kortrijk	30	12	6	12	42	39	42
Antwerp	30	10	11	9	38	40	41
Z Waregem	30	11	4	15	47	52	37
St Truiden	30	9	10	11	29	41	37
Oostende	30	10	6	14	42	41	36
Waasland-Bev	30	9	8	13	50	51	35
Lokeren	30	8	7	15	33	49	31
Mouscron	30	8	6	16	40	59	30
Eupen	30	6	9	15	40	57	27
Mechelen (R)	30	6	9	15	31	49	27

The top 6 formed the championship group, carrying forward half their regular-season points (rounded up)

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge (C)	10	3	3	4	17	12	46
Standard	10	6	3	1	20	9	43
Anderlecht	10	4	0	6	12	15	40
Gent	10	4	2	4	8	8	39
Genk	10	4	4	2	13	13	38
Charleroi	10	2	2	6	9	22	34

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Division split after 22-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zrinjski (C)	32	21	6	5	58	30	69
Zeljeznicar	32	19	6	7	49	30	63
Sarajevo	32	17	5	10	58	28	56
Siroki Brijeg	32	16	8	8	52	28	56
Radnik	32	12	9	11	35	38	45
Krupa	32	10	10	12	35	42	40

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
GOSK	32	13	6	13	32	36	45
Mladost DK	32	11	9	12	42	44	42
Borac (R)[1]	32	10	8	14	22	31	38
Sloboda	32	9	9	14	31	34	36
Celik	32	8	4	20	30	61	28
Vitez (R)	32	3	6	23	15	57	15

[1]Relegated after being refused the necessary licence to compete in the top division next season

BULGARIA

Division split after 26-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ludogorets (C)	36	27	7	2	91	22	88
CSKA	36	24	9	3	80	26	81
Levski	36	18	10	8	55	27	64
Beroe	36	16	11	9	45	43	59
Botev Plovdiv	36	15	11	10	62	49	56
Vereya	36	10	6	20	27	61	36

RELEG GRP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slavia	32	11	10	11	44	44	43
Cherno More	32	11	7	14	33	35	40
Pirin (R)[2]	32	7	9	16	29	42	30
Vitosha[1]	32	1	10	21	17	60	13

RELEG GRP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Septemvri	32	12	5	15	32	48	41
Lokomotiv P	32	9	10	13	26	43	37
Dunav[1]	32	8	7	17	24	44	31
Etar[1]	32	6	10	16	31	52	28

The bottom 2 in both relegation groups went into a further series of relegation play-offs & relegation/promotion play-offs
[1]Stay in top division after winning further play-offs
[2]Relegated after losing further play-offs

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo (C)	36	22	7	7	68	34	73
Rijeka	36	22	4	10	75	32	70
Hajduk	36	19	9	8	70	38	66
Osijek	36	14	14	8	53	38	56
Lokomotiva	36	14	9	13	47	48	51
Slaven	36	11	10	15	35	45	43
Inter	36	11	10	15	43	64	43
Rudes	36	10	10	16	41	62	40
Istra 1961[1]	36	6	9	21	28	60	27
Cibalia (R)	36	6	8	22	36	75	26

[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

CYPRUS

Division split after 26-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record
● *Regular-season bottom 2 Aris & Ethnikos Achna were relegated directly*

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APOEL (C)	36	27	5	4	92	35	86
Apollon	36	25	7	4	90	26	82
Anorthosis	36	19	12	5	53	29	69
AEK	36	20	8	8	74	39	68
AEL	36	17	7	12	47	38	58
Omonia N	36	14	5	17	58	60	47

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nea Salamina	36	14	6	16	53	55	48
Ermis	36	14	4	18	50	64	46
Doxa	36	14	4	18	54	63	46
Pafos	36	11	9	16	36	51	42
Alki	36	11	6	19	48	73	39
Olympiakos (R)	36	5	9	22	34	81	24

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Plzen (C)	30	20	6	4	55	23	66
Slavia	30	17	8	5	50	19	59
Jablonec	30	16	8	6	49	27	56
Olomouc	30	15	10	5	41	22	55
Sparta	30	14	11	5	43	25	53
Liberec	30	13	7	10	37	35	46
Boh'ians 1905	30	9	11	10	30	29	38
Teplice	30	8	10	12	32	40	34
Mlada Boleslav	30	9	7	14	31	43	34
Zlin	30	8	9	13	31	48	33
Dukla	30	9	5	16	32	55	32
Ostrava	30	7	10	13	36	43	31
Slovacko	30	6	13	11	23	32	31
Karvina	30	7	9	14	32	40	30
Jihlava (R)	30	8	6	16	30	48	30
Brno (R)	30	6	6	18	20	43	24

DENMARK

Division split after 26-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Midtjylland (C)	36	27	4	5	80	39	85
Brondby	36	24	9	3	82	37	81
Nordsjaelland	36	17	8	11	76	58	59
Copenhagen	36	17	7	12	65	47	58
AaB	36	10	15	11	38	44	45
Horsens	36	8	16	12	43	57	40

RELEG GRP 1	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hobro	32	12	8	12	41	39	44
AGF	32	11	8	13	35	43	41
Silkeborg (R)[2]	32	9	5	18	39	60	32
Helsingor (R)[2]	32	8	3	21	28	61	27

RELEG GRP 2	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
OB	32	11	9	12	43	37	42
SonderjyskE	32	11	8	13	42	40	41
Randers[1]	32	7	9	16	32	52	30
Lyngby (R)[2]	32	4	11	17	35	65	23

The bottom 2 in both relegation groups went into a further series of relegation & relegation/promotion play-offs
[1]Stay in top division after winning further play-offs
[2]Relegated after losing further play-offs

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City (C)	38	32	4	2	106	27	100
Man United	38	25	6	7	68	28	81
Tottenham	38	23	8	7	74	36	77
Liverpool	38	21	12	5	84	38	75
Chelsea	38	21	7	10	62	38	70
Arsenal	38	19	6	13	74	51	63
Burnley	38	14	12	12	36	39	54
Everton	38	13	10	15	44	58	49
Leicester	38	12	11	15	56	60	47
Newcastle	38	12	8	18	39	47	44
Crystal Palace	38	11	11	16	45	55	44
Bournemouth	38	11	11	16	45	61	44
West Ham	38	10	12	16	48	68	42
Watford	38	11	8	19	44	64	41
Brighton	38	9	13	16	34	54	40
Huddersfield	38	9	10	19	28	58	37
Southampton	38	7	15	16	37	56	36
Swansea (R)	38	8	9	21	28	56	33
Stoke (R)	38	7	12	19	35	68	33
West Brom (R)	38	6	13	19	31	56	31

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSG (C)	38	29	6	3	108	29	93
Monaco	38	24	8	6	85	45	80
Lyon	38	23	9	6	87	43	78
Marseille	38	22	11	5	80	47	77
Rennes	38	16	10	12	50	44	58
Bordeaux	38	16	7	15	53	48	55
Saint-Etienne	38	15	10	13	47	50	55
Nice	38	15	9	14	53	52	54
Nantes	38	14	10	14	36	41	52
Montpellier	38	11	18	9	36	33	51
Dijon	38	13	9	16	55	73	48
Guingamp	38	12	11	15	48	59	47
Amiens	38	12	9	17	37	42	45
Angers	38	9	14	15	42	52	41
Strasbourg	38	9	11	18	44	67	38
Caen	38	10	8	20	27	52	38
Lille	38	10	8	20	41	67	38
Toulouse[1]	38	9	10	19	38	54	37
Troyes (R)	38	9	6	23	32	59	33
Metz (R)	38	6	8	24	34	76	26

[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern M (C)	34	27	3	4	92	28	84
Schalke	34	18	9	7	53	37	63
Hoffenheim	34	15	10	9	66	48	55
B Dortmund	34	15	10	9	64	47	55
B Leverkusen	34	15	10	9	58	44	55
RB Leipzig	34	15	8	11	57	53	53
Stuttgart	34	15	6	13	36	36	51
Eintracht F	34	14	7	13	45	45	49
M'gladbach	34	13	8	13	47	52	47
Hertha Berlin	34	10	13	11	43	46	43
Werder B	34	10	12	12	37	40	42
Augsburg	34	10	11	13	43	46	41
Hanover	34	10	9	15	44	54	39
Mainz	34	9	9	16	38	52	36
Freiburg	34	8	12	14	32	56	36
Wolfsburg[1]	34	6	15	13	36	48	33
Hamburg (R)	34	8	7	19	29	53	31
Cologne (R)	34	5	7	22	35	70	22

[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

GIBRALTAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lincoln RI (C)	27	21	2	4	71	19	65
Europa	27	19	3	5	67	20	60
St Joseph's	27	17	3	7	53	30	54
Gibraltar Utd	27	16	5	6	45	27	53
Mons Calpe	27	14	2	11	48	35	44
Gib Phoenix	27	8	6	13	34	47	30
Glacis United	27	7	5	15	34	44	26
Lions Gib'tar	27	6	5	16	27	63	23
Lynx[1]	27	6	4	17	22	48	22
Manchester (R)	27	0	7	20	20	88	7

[1]Enter rel/prom play-off

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AEK (C)	30	21	7	2	50	12	70
PAOK	30	20	4	6	59	19	64
Olympiakos[1]	30	18	6	6	63	28	57
Atromitos	30	15	11	4	43	21	56
Asteras	30	12	9	9	39	24	45
Xanthi	30	12	9	9	31	30	45
Panionios	30	10	10	10	32	31	40
Panetolikos	30	9	8	13	31	40	35
Giannina	30	7	13	10	31	34	34
Levadiakos	30	8	10	12	23	34	34
Panathinaikos[2]	30	10	10	10	30	30	32
Larissa	30	7	10	13	22	41	31
Lamia	30	6	12	12	20	34	30
Apollon	30	6	11	13	23	36	29
Kerkyra (R)	30	4	10	16	19	51	22
Platanias (R)	30	2	4	24	14	65	10

[1]3pts deducted for fans' misbehaviour
[2]8pts deducted – 2 for fans' misbehaviour, 6 for failing to pay money owed to a player in time

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV (C)	34	26	5	3	87	39	83
Ajax	34	25	4	5	89	33	79
AZ	34	22	5	7	72	38	71
Feyenoord	34	20	6	8	76	39	66
Utrecht	34	14	12	8	58	53	54
Vitesse	34	13	10	11	63	47	49
Den Haag	34	13	8	13	45	53	47
Heerenveen	34	12	10	12	48	53	46
Zwolle	34	12	8	14	42	54	44
Heracles	34	11	9	14	50	64	42
Excelsior	34	11	7	16	41	56	40
Groningen	34	8	14	12	50	50	38
Willem II	34	10	7	17	50	63	37
NAC	34	9	7	18	41	57	34
VVV	34	7	13	14	35	54	34
Roda JC (R)[1]	34	8	6	20	42	69	30
Sparta (R)[1]	34	7	6	21	34	75	27
Twente (R)	34	5	9	20	37	63	24

[1]Relegated after losing in the rel/prom play-offs

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Videoton (C)	33	20	8	5	65	28	68
Ferencvaros	33	18	12	3	69	31	66
Ujpest	33	12	13	8	41	38	49
Honved	33	13	8	12	50	53	47
Debrecen	33	12	8	13	53	47	44
Puskas Akad	33	11	10	12	41	46	43
Paks	33	11	9	13	43	48	42
Haladas	33	11	5	17	35	50	38
Mezokovesd	33	9	10	14	35	52	37
Diosgyor	33	10	6	17	44	53	36
Balmazuj's (R)	33	8	12	13	39	46	36
Vasas (R)	33	9	7	17	38	61	34

ISRAEL

Division split after 26-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Beer Sheva (C)	36	24	8	4	70	27	80
Mac Tel Aviv	36	21	8	7	60	33	71
Beitar J'sam	36	20	8	8	75	51	68
Hapoel Haifa	36	17	11	8	48	39	62
Netanya	36	16	10	10	59	54	58
Bnei Yehuda	36	13	10	13	47	41	49

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kiryat Shmona	33	13	6	14	39	36	45
M Petah Tikva	33	12	7	14	40	44	43
Ra'anana	33	11	7	15	36	45	40
Maccabi Haifa	33	10	8	15	38	39	38
Bnei Sakhnin	33	10	8	15	32	47	38
Ashdod	33	6	10	17	29	48	28
Ashkelon (R)	33	4	9	20	23	51	21
Acre[1] (R)	33	6	4	23	26	67	20

[1]2pts deducted for breaking contract rules

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus (C)	38	30	5	3	86	24	95
Napoli	38	28	7	3	77	29	91
Roma	38	23	8	7	61	28	77
Internazionale	38	20	12	6	66	30	72
Lazio	38	21	9	8	89	49	72
Milan	38	18	10	10	56	42	64
Atalanta	38	16	12	10	57	39	60
Fiorentina	38	16	9	13	54	46	57
Torino	38	13	15	10	54	46	54
Sampdoria	38	16	6	16	56	60	54
Sassuolo	38	11	10	17	29	59	43
Genoa	38	11	8	19	33	43	41
Chievo	38	10	10	18	36	59	40
Udinese	38	12	4	22	48	63	40
Bologna	38	11	6	21	40	52	39
Cagliari	38	11	6	21	33	61	39
SPAL	38	8	14	16	39	59	38
Crotone (R)	38	9	8	21	40	66	35
Verona (R)	38	7	4	27	30	78	25
Benevento (R)	38	6	3	29	33	84	21

KOSOVO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Drita (C)	33	18	13	2	53	21	67
Prishtina	33	18	10	5	39	18	64
Llapi	33	16	6	11	51	41	54
Trepca '89	33	14	11	8	41	25	53
Feronikeli	33	10	18	5	32	18	48
Drenica	33	13	9	11	34	27	48
Liria	33	13	9	11	34	30	48
Gjilani	33	10	16	7	29	21	46
Vellaznimi (R)[1]	33	10	14	9	29	28	44
Flamurtari[2]	33	6	7	20	28	53	25
Besa (R)	33	6	4	23	28	64	22
Vllaznia (R)	33	3	5	25	16	68	14

[1]Relegated after losing rel/prom play-off
[2]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

LUXEMBOURG

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
F91 (C)	26	22	2	2	81	26	68
Progres	26	20	3	3	72	28	63
Fola	26	14	5	7	72	41	47
Jeunesse E	26	13	5	8	52	35	44
Differdange	26	11	5	10	48	38	38
Mondorf	26	10	8	8	40	36	38
Racing	26	9	8	9	41	40	35
Hostert	26	9	7	10	37	46	34
Petange	26	9	4	13	43	51	31
Hamm Benfica	26	8	6	12	30	45	30
Strassen	26	8	5	13	38	60	29
Victoria[1]	26	7	5	14	37	59	26
Rodange (R)	26	4	10	12	27	55	22
US Esch (R)	26	1	1	24	15	73	4

[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

MACEDONIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shkendija (C)	36	29	4	3	101	27	91
Vardar	36	16	8	12	53	41	56
Rabotnicki	36	14	10	12	50	43	52
Shkupi	36	13	12	11	51	46	51
Sileks	36	13	11	12	30	37	50
Akad Pandev	36	10	12	14	43	47	42
Renova	36	10	11	15	36	53	41
Pobeda P[1]	36	10	8	18	36	56	38
FK Skopje (R)	36	7	14	15	24	43	35
Pelister (R)	36	8	10	18	37	68	34

[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

MALTA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valletta (C)	26	17	7	2	40	11	58
Balzan	26	16	7	3	42	19	55
Gzira	26	15	6	5	52	33	51
Birkirkara	26	15	2	9	44	28	47
Floriana	26	12	10	4	48	18	46
Hibernians	26	13	7	6	43	16	46
Sliema	26	11	7	8	35	26	40
Hamrun	26	10	5	11	39	33	35
Senglea	26	7	5	14	29	47	26
Mosta	26	7	5	14	28	52	26
St Andrews	26	6	6	14	21	41	24
Tarxien[1]	26	6	5	15	34	56	23
Naxxar (R)	26	5	7	14	27	41	22
Lija (R)	26	1	3	22	23	84	6

[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

MONTENEGRO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sutjeska (C)	36	24	7	5	55	23	79
Buducnost	36	14	15	7	44	30	57
FK Mladost	36	12	15	9	42	33	51
Grbalj	36	12	14	10	39	39	50
Zeta	36	12	13	11	40	35	49
Rudar	36	13	10	13	32	28	49
Iskra	36	12	9	15	33	34	45
Kom (R)[1]	36	11	10	15	36	45	43
Petrovac[2]	36	9	11	16	25	40	38
Decic (R)	36	3	12	21	25	64	21

[1]Relegated after losing rel/prom play-off
[2]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

NORTHERN IRELAND

Division split after 33-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Crusaders (C)	38	28	7	3	106	38	91
Coleraine	38	26	11	1	76	31	89
Glenavon	38	19	12	7	85	52	69
Linfield	38	20	7	11	72	45	67
Cliftonville	38	20	5	13	68	45	65
Ballymena	38	14	6	18	53	65	48

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Glentoran	38	14	9	15	52	52	51
Dungannon	38	13	6	19	42	62	45
Ards	38	12	4	22	42	74	40
Warrenpoint	38	8	6	24	52	86	30
Carrick (R)[1]	38	6	5	27	31	78	23
Bal'mallard (R)	38	5	8	25	38	89	23

[1]Relegated after losing rel/prom play-off

POLAND

Division split after 30-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Legia (C)	37	22	4	11	55	35	70
Jagiellonia	37	20	7	10	55	41	67
Lech	37	16	12	9	53	34	60
Gornik Zabrze	37	16	12	9	68	54	60
Wisla Plock	37	17	6	14	53	45	57
Wisla Krakow	37	15	10	12	51	42	55
Zaglebie Lubin	37	13	13	11	45	42	52
Korona	37	12	13	12	49	54	49

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cracovia	37	13	11	13	51	52	50
Slask	37	13	11	13	50	54	50
Pogon Szcz'in	37	12	9	16	46	54	45
Arka	37	11	10	16	46	48	43
Lechia[1]	37	9	13	15	46	58	39
Piast	37	8	13	16	40	48	37
Niecieczа (R)	37	9	9	19	39	66	36
Sandecja (R)	37	6	15	16	34	54	33

[1]1pt deducted for overdue payments

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto (C)	34	28	4	2	82	18	88
Benfica	34	25	6	3	80	22	81
Sporting L	34	24	6	4	63	24	78
Braga	34	24	3	7	74	29	75
Rio Ave	34	15	6	13	40	42	51
Chaves	34	13	8	13	47	55	47
Maritimo	34	13	8	13	36	49	47
Boavista	34	13	6	15	35	44	45
Vit Guimaraes	34	13	4	17	45	56	43
Portimonense	34	10	8	16	52	60	38
Tondela	34	10	8	16	41	50	38
Belenenses	34	9	10	15	33	46	37
Aves	34	9	7	18	36	51	34
Vit Setubal	34	7	11	16	39	62	32
Moreirense	34	8	8	18	29	50	32
Feirense	34	9	4	21	32	48	31
Pacos F'ra (R)	34	7	9	18	33	59	30
Estoril (R)	34	8	6	20	29	61	30

ROMANIA

Division split after 26-round regular season; teams carried forward half their points (rounded up)

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CFR (C)	10	5	5	0	12	6	50
FCSB	10	6	3	1	14	6	49
Universitatea	10	3	3	4	10	10	38
Viitorul	10	3	4	3	13	11	35
Astra	10	3	2	5	9	11	33
CSM Poli Iasi	10	1	1	8	5	19	24

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	14	11	1	2	29	10	54
Botosani	14	5	5	4	12	9	40
Sepsi	14	6	6	2	21	14	34
Gaz Metan	14	6	4	4	18	15	30
Concordia	14	4	4	6	13	17	30
Voluntari[1]	14	3	4	7	16	22	27
Poli Timis'ra (R)	14	3	4	7	10	16	27
Juventus (R)	14	3	2	9	9	25	17

[1]Enter rel/prom play-off

RUSSIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lokomotiv (C)	30	18	6	6	41	21	60
CSKA	30	17	7	6	49	23	58
Spartak M	30	16	8	6	51	32	56
Krasnodar	30	16	6	8	46	30	54
Zenit	30	14	11	5	46	21	53
Ufa	30	11	10	9	34	30	43
Arsenal	30	12	6	12	35	41	42
Dynamo	30	10	10	10	29	30	40
Akhmat	30	10	9	11	30	34	39
Rubin	30	9	11	10	32	25	38
Rostov	30	9	10	11	27	28	37
Ural	30	8	13	9	31	32	37
Amkar[1]	30	9	8	13	20	30	35
Anzhi (R)[2]	30	6	6	18	31	55	24
Tosno (R)	30	6	6	18	23	54	24
SKA (R)	30	2	7	21	16	55	13

[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off
[2]Relegated after losing rel/prom play-off

SAN MARINO

2017-18 Championship Final
May 23: La Fiorita 1 Folgore 0.

SCOTLAND

Division split after 33-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic (C)	38	24	10	4	73	25	82
Aberdeen	38	22	7	9	56	37	73
Rangers	38	21	7	10	76	50	70
Hibernian	38	18	13	7	62	46	67
Kilmarnock	38	16	11	11	49	47	59
Hearts	38	12	13	13	39	39	49

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Motherwell	38	13	9	16	43	49	48
St Johnstone	38	12	10	16	42	53	46
Dundee	38	11	6	21	36	57	39
Hamilton	38	9	6	23	47	68	33
Partick (R)[1]	38	8	9	21	31	61	33
Ross County (R)	38	6	11	21	40	62	29

[1]Relegated after losing rel/prom play-off

SERBIA

Division split after 30-round regular season; teams carried forward only half their points (rounded up) but the rest of their regular-season record in full

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star (C)	37	32	4	1	96	19	60
Partizan	37	23	8	6	71	33	43
Radnicki Nis	37	18	8	11	63	51	37
Spartak	37	18	7	12	62	49	37
Vozdovac	37	16	8	13	48	42	33
Cukaricki	37	16	9	12	54	44	32
Napredak	37	15	8	14	57	55	30
Vojvodina	37	14	8	15	43	43	28

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Radnik	37	13	7	17	42	60	28
Mladost	37	11	11	15	44	52	27
Zemun	37	11	10	16	39	46	26
Macva	37	11	8	18	38	52	26
Rad	37	10	6	21	40	64	26
Backa	37	11	7	19	41	64	25
Javor (R)	37	10	6	21	33	57	24
Borac (R)	37	7	5	25	31	71	15

Final tables: 2017-18 continued...

SLOVAKIA

Division split after 22-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spartak T (C)	32	20	4	8	41	28	64
Slovan	32	17	8	7	58	37	59
Dun'ka Streda	32	16	9	7	46	32	57
Zilina	32	17	2	13	63	51	53
Trencin	32	15	6	11	75	47	51
Ruzomberok	32	10	10	12	36	39	40

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nitra	32	11	12	9	33	29	45
Michalovce	32	11	8	13	35	34	41
Podbrezova	32	11	5	16	29	43	38
Zlate Moravce	32	8	7	17	39	52	31
Senica[1]	32	6	8	18	29	58	26
Tatran P (R)	32	5	11	16	22	56	26

[1]*Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*

SLOVENIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olimpija (C)	36	23	11	2	61	17	80
Maribor	36	24	8	4	76	28	80
Domzale	36	22	7	7	79	31	73
Rudar	36	15	5	16	50	49	50
Celje	36	14	8	14	56	51	50
Gorica	36	14	5	17	40	48	47
Krsko	36	9	7	20	36	61	34
Aluminij	36	8	9	19	40	63	33
Triglav[1]	36	7	7	22	29	68	28
Ankaran (R)	36	5	11	20	33	84	26

[1]*Enter rel/prom play-off*

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona (C)	38	28	9	1	99	29	93
Atl Madrid	38	23	10	5	58	22	79
Real Madrid	38	22	10	6	94	44	76
Valencia	38	22	7	9	65	38	73
Villarreal	38	18	7	13	57	50	61
Betis	38	18	6	14	60	61	60
Sevilla	38	17	7	14	49	58	58
Getafe	38	15	10	13	42	33	55
Eibar	38	14	9	15	44	50	51
Girona	38	14	9	15	50	59	51
Espanyol	38	12	13	13	36	42	49
R Sociedad	38	14	7	17	66	59	49
Celta Vigo	38	13	10	15	59	60	49
Alaves	38	15	2	21	40	50	47
Levante	38	11	13	14	44	58	46
Ath Bilbao	38	10	13	15	41	49	43
Leganes	38	12	7	19	34	51	43
Dep Coruna (R)	38	6	11	21	38	76	29
Las Palmas (R)	38	5	7	26	24	74	22
Malaga (R)	38	5	5	28	24	61	20

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Young Boys (C)	36	26	6	4	84	41	84
Basle	36	20	9	7	72	36	69
Lucerne	36	15	9	12	51	51	54
Zurich	36	12	13	11	50	44	49
St Gallen	36	14	3	19	52	72	45
Sion	36	11	9	16	53	56	42
Thun	36	12	6	18	53	68	42
Lugano	36	12	6	18	38	55	42
Grasshopper	36	10	9	17	43	52	39
Lausanne (R)	36	9	8	19	46	67	35

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Galatasaray (C)	34	24	3	7	75	33	75
Fenerbahce	34	21	9	4	78	36	72
Basaksehir	34	22	6	6	62	34	72
Besiktas	34	21	8	5	69	30	71
Trabzonspor	34	15	10	9	63	51	55
Goztepe	34	13	10	11	49	50	49
Sivasspor	34	14	7	13	45	53	49
Kasimpasa	34	13	7	14	57	58	46
Kayserispor	34	12	8	14	44	55	44
Malatyaspor	34	11	10	13	38	45	43
Akhisar	34	11	9	14	44	53	42
Alanyaspor	34	11	7	16	55	59	40
Bursaspor	34	11	6	17	43	48	39
Antalyaspor	34	10	8	16	40	59	38
Konyaspor	34	9	9	16	38	42	36
Osmanlis'r (R)	34	8	9	17	49	60	33
Genclerb'gi (R)	34	8	9	17	37	54	33
Karabuks'r (R)	34	3	3	28	20	86	12

UKRAINE

Division split after 22-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar (C)	32	24	3	5	71	24	75
Dynamo	32	22	7	3	64	25	73
Vorskla	32	14	7	11	37	35	49
Zorya	32	11	10	11	44	44	43
Mariupol	32	10	9	13	38	41	39
Veres	32	7	14	11	28	30	35

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Oleksandria	32	10	15	7	32	27	45
Karpaty	32	8	13	11	28	45	37
Olimpik	32	9	9	14	29	38	36
Zirka (R)[1]	32	7	10	15	22	40	31
Chorn'rets (R)[1]	32	6	11	15	26	49	29
Stal (R)	32	6	8	18	23	44	26

[1]*Relegated after losing rel/prom play-off*

WALES

Division split after 22-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CHAMP GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Saints (C)	32	23	5	4	83	32	74
Bangor (R)[1]	32	19	3	10	49	32	60
Connah's Quay	32	17	6	9	46	29	57
Bala	32	15	4	13	37	48	49
Cefn Druids	32	12	8	12	38	41	44
Cardiff Met Uni	32	12	7	13	46	41	43

[1]*Relegated after being refused the necessary licence to compete in the top division next season*

RELEG GRP	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barry	32	16	5	11	39	31	53
Newtown	32	12	4	16	52	55	40
Aberystwyth	32	10	7	15	47	56	37
Llandudno	32	9	9	14	39	44	36
Carmarth'n	32	8	5	19	35	62	29
Prestatyn (R)	32	4	7	21	27	67	19

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Group A

Feb 27
Defensor Sporting (Uru) 1 (Maulella 85)
Gremio (Bra) 1 (Maicon 81)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,601. **Ref:** Rapallini (Arg)

Monagas (Ven) 0
Cerro Porteno (Par) 2 (Insaurralde 27, M Caceres 53)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Vigliano (Arg)
Sent off: Vogliotti (Monagas) 75

Mar13
Cerro Porteno 2 (Churin 9, 90+6)
Defensor Sporting 1 (Benavidez 47)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)

Apr 4
Gremio 4 (Jael 51, Everton 61, Luan 87, Cicero 90)
Monagas 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 21,250. **Ref:** Orbe (Ecu)

Apr17
Cerro Porteno 0
Gremio 0
Att: 46,167. **Ref:** Delfino (Arg)

Defensor Sporting 3 (Benavidez 58, 65, Cabrera pen 69)
Monagas 1 (Vogliotti 64)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Haro (Per)

Apr 25
Monagas 1 (Trejo 53)
Defensor Sporting 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 35,123. **Ref:** Rojas (Col)

May1
Gremio 5 (Everton 28, 72, Ramiro 31, Jael 50, Cicero 82)
Cerro Porteno 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 27,315. **Ref:** Loustau (Arg)

May15
Defensor Sporting 0
Cerro Porteno 1 (Churin 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Pitana (Arg)

Monagas 1 (Kannemann og 90+2)
Gremio 2 (Ramiro 69, Jailson pen 90+7)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 29,500. **Ref:** Rapallini (Arg)

May 23
Cerro Porteno 3 (Churin pen 6, Haedo Valdez pen 48, 90+2)
Monagas 2 (Rojas 71, Cadiz 80)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Espinoza (Arg)

Gremio 1 (Luan 66)
Defensor Sporting 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Gallo (Col)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP A – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gremio (Q)	6	4	2	0	13	2	14
C Porteno (Q)	6	4	1	1	8	8	13
Defensor (SC)	6	1	1	4	5	7	4
Monagas	6	1	0	5	5	14	3

Group B

Feb 27
Colo Colo (Chl) 0
Atletico Nacional (Col) 1 (Hernandez 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 39,034. **Ref:** Sampaio (Bra)

Feb 28
Delfin (Ecu) 1 (Ordonez 45+2)
Bolivar (Bol) 1 (Riquelme 19)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 15,253. **Ref:** Toski Marques (Bra)

Mar14
Atletico Nacional 4 (Moreno pen 32, Lenis 46, 57, M Torres 53)
Delfin 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,560. **Ref:** Haro (Per)
Sent off: Luna (Delfin) 40

Bolivar 1 (Arce pen 38)
Colo Colo 1 (Rivero 43)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Herrera (Arg)

Apr 5
Bolivar 1 (Riquelme 38)
Atletico Nacional 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 24,700. **Ref:** Pitana (Arg)

Colo Colo 0
Delfin 2 (Arismendi 52, Carmona og 90+3)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,282. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Apr 24
Atletico Nacional 4 (Castellani 13, Hernandez 32, Moreno 34, 65)
Bolivar 1 (Riquelme 49)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 37,829. **Ref:** Claus (Bra)

May 2
Delfin 1 (Chicaiza 79)
Colo Colo 2 (Valdes 21, Paredes pen 45)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 14,900. **Ref:** Cunha (Uru)
Sent off: Nazareno (Delfin) 43

May15
Colo Colo 2 (Paredes 31, 38)
Bolivar 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 38,423. **Ref:** Ricci (Bra)

Delfin 1 (Chicaiza 20)
Atletico Nacional 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 16,536. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)

May 24
Atletico Nacional 0
Colo Colo 0
Ref: Pitana (Arg)

Bolivar 2 (Callejon 13, 48)
Delfin 1 (Raldes og 50)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Sampaio (Bra)
Sent off: Chicaiza (Delfin) 67

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP B – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atl Nacional (Q)	6	3	1	2	9	3	10
Colo Colo (Q)	6	2	2	2	5	5	8
Bolivar (SC)	6	2	2	2	6	9	8
Delfin	6	2	1	3	6	9	7

Group C

Mar13
Atletico Tucuman (Arg) 0
Libertad (Par) 2 (Salcedo 64, Alborno 79)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Claus (Bra)

Mar15
The Strongest (Bol) 1 (Carcelen 20)
Penarol (Uru) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 27,579. **Ref:** Daronco (Bra)

Apr 3
Libertad 3 (Baez 59, Leiva 66, 90+3)
The Strongest 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,711. **Ref:** Haro (Per)
Sent off: Carcelen (The Strongest) 28

Apr 4
Penarol 3 (C Rodriguez pen 11, Acosta og 50, Rojo 83)
Atletico Tucuman 1 (Rodriguez pen 65)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 28,605. **Ref:** Sampaio (Bra)

Apr18
Libertad 2 (Salcedo 74, O Cardozo 90)
Penarol 1 (Fernandez 47)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,031. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)
Sent off: Rojo (Penarol) 88

The Strongest 1 (Ibarguen 38)
Atletico Tucuman 2 (Romat 12, Toledo 75)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 24,907. **Ref:** Bascunan (Chl)

Apr 25
Atletico Tucuman 3 (Diaz 31, Nunez 45, Rodriguez 90)
The Strongest 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 32,500. **Ref:** Flavio de Oliveira (Bra)

Apr 26
Penarol 2 (C Rodriguez pen 44, Palacios 90+1)
Libertad 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,911. **Ref:** Daronco (Bra)

May 2
Atletico Tucuman 1 (Diaz 59)
Penarol 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Ricci (Bra)

May 3
The Strongest 1 (Castro 48)
Libertad 3 (O Cardozo 22, pen 90+3, Bareiro 86)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Marques Ribeiro (Bra)

May17
Libertad 0
Atletico Tucuman 0
Att: 9,561. **Ref:** Sampaio (Bra)
Sent off: Sanchez (Atletico Tucuman) 39

Penarol 2 (Palacios 20, C Rodriguez pen 37)
The Strongest 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 24,015. **Ref:** Rojas (Col)
Sent off: Franco Martinez (Penarol) 66

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP C – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad (Q)	6	4	1	1	10	4	13
At Tucuman (Q)	6	3	1	2	7	6	10
Penarol (SC)	6	3	0	3	8	5	9
The Strongest	6	1	0	5	3	13	3

Group D

Feb 28
Flamengo (Bra) 2 (Henrique Dourado pen 54, Everton 66)
River Plate (Arg) 2 (Mora 55, Mayada 87)
HT: 0-0. *Closed doors.* **Ref:** Espinoza (Per)

Mar1
Santa Fe (Col) 1 (Morelo 42)
Emelec (Ecu) 1 (Angulo 57)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 28,689. **Ref:** Soto (Ven)

Mar14
Emelec 1 (Angulo 65)
Flamengo 2 (Vinicius Junior 78, 85)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Diaz de Vivar (Par)

Apr 5
River Plate 0
Santa Fe 0
Att: 61,000. **Ref:** Bascunan (Chl)

Apr18
Flamengo 1 (Henrique Dourado 8)
Santa Fe 1 (Morelo 31)
HT: 1-1. *Closed doors.* **Ref:** Cunha (Uru)

Apr19
Emelec 0
River Plate 1 (Pinola 44)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 26,345. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)

Apr 25
Santa Fe 0
Flamengo 0
Att: 20,312. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Apr 26
River Plate 2 (Pratto 66, G Martinez 74)
Emelec 1 (Preciado 90+2)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 58,215. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)

May 3
Santa Fe 0
River Plate 1 (Pratto 24)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 34,508. **Ref:** Tobar (Chl)

May16
Flamengo 2 (Everton Ribeiro 48, 90+2)
Emelec 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 63,577. **Ref:** Haro (Per)

May 23
Emelec 0
Santa Fe 3 (Tesillo 39, Morelo 52, Pajoy 54)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Maza (Chl)
Sent off: Paredes 63, Bagui 90+3 (both Emelec)

River Plate 0
Flamengo 0
Ref: Cunha (Uru)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
River Plate (Q)	6	3	3	0	6	3	12
Flamengo (Q)	6	2	4	0	7	4	10
Santa Fe (SC)	6	1	4	1	5	3	7
Emelec	6	0	1	5	3	11	1

Group E

Feb 27
Racing Club (Arg) 4 (Martinez 14, 45, 63, Solari 77)
Cruzeiro (Bra) 2 (De Arrascaeta 30, Robinho 70)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 35,920. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)
Sent off: Saravia (Racing Club) 89

Mar13
Vasco da Gama (Bra) 0
Universidad de Chile (Chl) 1 (Araos 77)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 19,281. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Apr 3
Universidad de Chile 1 (Pizarro 10)
Racing Club 1 (Donatti 23)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 45,545. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)
Sent off: Gonzalez (Racing Club) 67

Apr 4
Cruzeiro 0
Vasco da Gama 0
Att: 38,019. **Ref:** Claus (Bra)

Apr19
Racing Club 4 (Centurion 33, Martinez 39, Zaracho 52, Lopez pen 61)
Vasco da Gama 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 41,893. **Ref:** Mereles (Par)

Universidad de Chile 0
Cruzeiro 0
Att: 45,084. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)

Apr 26
Cruzeiro 7 (Thiago Neves 10, 75, Rafinha 18, Sassa pen 44, 62, De Arrascaeta 54, Rafael Sobis 81)
Universidad de Chile 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 37,095. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)
Sent off: Vilches 45+1, Echeverria 49 (both Universidad de Chile)

Vasco da Gama 1 (Wagner 81)
Racing Club 1 (Martinez 32)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,346. **Ref:** Haro (Per)
Sent off: Desabato (Vasco da Gama) 58

May 2
Vasco da Gama 0
Cruzeiro 4 (Leo 10, Thiago Neves 25, Sassa 33, 55)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 11,501. **Ref:** Daronco (Bra)

May 3
Racing Club 1 (Donatti 81)
Universidad de Chile 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 43,785. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)
Sent off: Reyes (Universidad de Chile) 82

May 22
Cruzeiro 2 (Thiago Neves 3, Lucas Silva 11)
Racing Club 1 (Centurion 28)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 44,512. **Ref:** Rojas (Col)

Universidad de Chile 0
Vasco da Gama 2 (Bruno Silva 15, Yago Pikachu 82)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 38,660. **Ref:** Vargas (Bol)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruzeiro (Q)	6	3	2	1	15	5	11
Racing Club (Q)	6	3	2	1	12	6	11
Vasco (SC)	6	1	2	3	3	10	5
Univ de Chile	6	1	2	3	2	11	5

Group F

Feb 28
Nacional (Uru) 0
Estudiantes (Arg) 0
Att: 20,000. **Ref:** Diaz de Vivar (Par)

Mar1
Real Garcilaso (Per) 2 (Vidales 8, Ramua 89)
Santos (Bra) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,190. **Ref:** Vargas (Bol)

Mar14
Estudiantes 3 (Melano 53, Pavone pen 75, 87)
Real Garcilaso 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 35,932. **Ref:** Herrera (Ven)

Mar15
Santos 3 (Eduardo Sasha 20, 83, Rodrygo 48)
Nacional 1 (Oliva 82)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,077. **Ref:** Mereles (Par)
Sent off: Gabriel (Santos) 44

Apr 3
Real Garcilaso 0
Nacional 0
Att: 33,709. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)

Apr 5
Estudiantes 0
Santos 1 (Arthur Gomes 19)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 27,904. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)

Apr 24
Santos 2 (Gabriel 44, Lucas Verissimo 50)
Estudiantes 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 15,632. **Ref:** Aquino (Par)
Sent off: Escobar (Estudiantes) 90+3

Apr 25
Nacional 4 (Rodriguez 40, Corujo 81, Barcia 86, Bergessio 88)
Real Garcilaso 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Argote (Ven)

May1
Nacional 1 (Barcia 58)
Santos 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 26,500. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)
Sent off: Leo Cittadini (Santos) 90+3

Real Garcilaso 0
Estudiantes 0
Att: 29,801. **Ref:** Bascunan (Chl)

May 24
Estudiantes 3 (Otero pen 62, pen 90, Melano 69)
Nacional 1 (Zunino 4)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Diaz de Vivar (Par)
Sent off: Brana (Estudiantes) 80; Bergessio 75, Oliva 90+5 (both Nacional)

Santos 0
Real Garcilaso 0
Ref: Herrera (Ven)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos (Q)	6	3	1	2	6	4	10
Estudiantes (Q)	6	2	2	2	6	4	8
Nacional (SC)	6	2	2	2	7	6	8
Real Garcilaso	6	1	3	2	2	7	6

Group G

Feb 28
Millonarios (Col) 0
Corinthians (Bra) 0
Att: 25,589. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)

Mar1
Deportivo Lara (Ven) 1 (Sierra 11)
Independiente (Arg) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 5,100. **Ref:** Haro (Per)

Mar14
Corinthians 2 (Emerson Sheik 65, Pernia og 77)
Deportivo Lara 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 31,767. **Ref:** Orosco (Bol)

Mar15
Independiente 1 (Benitez 24)
Millonarios 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 32,654. **Ref:** Gonzalez (Uru)

Apr17
Millonarios 4 (Del Valle 20, 35, 79, Quinones 67)
Deportivo Lara 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 34,309. **Ref:** Orbe (Ecu)

Apr18
Independiente 0
Corinthians 1 (Jadson 81)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,325. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Apr 24
Deportivo Lara 2 (Sierra 10, pen 28)
Millonarios 1 (Del Valle pen 70)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 10,903. **Ref:** Espinoza (Per)

May 2
Corinthians 1 (Jadson 32)
Independiente 2 (Benitez 2, Romero og 25)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 36,508. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)
Sent off: Emerson Sheik (Corinthians) 80

May17
Deportivo Lara 2 (Reyes 45+1, Hernandez 77)
Corinthians 7 (Jadson 11, pen 32, 52, Sidcley 70, Romero 86, Junior Dutra 90+10, 90+11)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 25,820. **Ref:** Cunha (Uru)

Millonarios 1 (Cadavid pen 59)
Independiente 1 (Gigliotti 75)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 26,511. **Ref:** Tobar (Chl)

May 24
Corinthians 0
Millonarios 1 (Carrillo 73)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Haro (Per)

Independiente 2 (Benitez 38, Gigliotti 81)
Deportivo Lara 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Aquino (Par)
Sent off: Carrillo (Deportivo Lara) 60

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP G – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Corinthians (Q)	6	3	1	2	11	5	10
Independ'te (Q)	6	3	1	2	6	4	10
Millonarios (SC)	6	2	2	2	7	4	8
Dep Lara	6	2	0	4	5	16	6

Group H

Mar1
Alianza Lima (Per) 0
Boca Juniors (Arg) 0
Att: 36,503. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Junior (Col) 0
Palmeiras (Bra) 3 (Bruno Henrique 19, 71, Borja 52)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 28,753. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)
Sent off: G Gutierrez (Junior) 9

Apr 3
Palmeiras 2 (Thiago Martins 10, Borja 46)
Alianza Lima 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,456. **Ref:** Argote (Ven)

Apr 4
Boca Juniors 1 (Pavon 28)
Junior 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 47,546. **Ref:** Mereles (Par)

Apr11
Palmeiras 1 (Keno 90)
Boca Juniors 1 (Tevez 90+2)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 37,192. **Ref:** Cunha (Uru)

Apr19
Alianza Lima 0
Junior 2 (Chara 10, Alvez 83)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 30,209. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)

Apr 25
Boca Juniors 0
Palmeiras 2 (Keno 40, Lucas Lima 67)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 48,367. **Ref:** Tobar (Chl)

Apr 26
Junior 1 (Ruiz 61)
Alianza Lima 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 29,001. **Ref:** Herrera (Ven)

May 2
Junior 1 (Ruiz 33)
Boca Juniors 1 (Ruiz og 51)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 34,195. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ven)

May 3
Alianza Lima 1 (Cruzado pen 72)
Palmeiras 3 (Willian 20, Hyoran 32, Borja 67)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 15,873. **Ref:** Vargas (Bol)

May16
Boca Juniors 5 (Cardona 12, Fabra 20, Abila 34, 42, Tevez 55)
Alianza Lima 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 47,854. **Ref:** Diaz de Vivar (Par)

Palmeiras 3 (Borja 52, 60, 69)
Junior 1 (T Gutierrez 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,100. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)

LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP H – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palmeiras (Q)	6	5	1	0	14	3	16
Boca Jnrs (Q)	6	2	3	1	8	4	9
Junior (SC)	6	2	1	3	5	8	7
Alianza Lima	6	0	1	5	1	13	1

● *The top 2 in each group have qualified for the 1st knockout round (last16); the 3rd-placed teams enter the Sudamericana Cup in the 2nd round*

SUDAMERICANA CUP

1st round

1st legs - Feb13-Apr18; 2nd legs - Mar 6-May 23
Atletico Paranaense (Bra) v Newell's Old Boys (Arg) 3-0, 1-2 (agg 4-2); Audax Italiano (Chl) v Botafogo (Bra) 1-2, 1-1 (agg 2-3); Barcelona (Ecu) v General Diaz (Par) 0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2); Blooming (Bol) v Bahia (Bra) 1-0, 0-4 (agg 1-4); Defensa y Justicia (Arg) v America (Col) 0-1, 3-0 (agg 3-1); Deportivo Cali (Col) v Danubio (Uru) 3-0, 2-3 (agg 5-3); El Nacional (Ecu) v San Jose (Bol) 3-2, 1-1 (agg 4-3); Estudiantes Merida (Ven) v Deportes Temuco (Chl) 1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3); Everton (Chl) v Caracas (Ven) 1-2, 1-0 (agg 2-2, Caracas on away goals); Fluminense (Bra) v Nacional Potosi (Bol) 3-0, 0-2 (agg 3-2); Jaguares (Col) v Boston River (Uru) 2-1, 0-3 (agg 2-4); Lanus (Arg) v Sporting Cristal (Per) 4-2, 1-2 (agg 5-4); LDU Quito (Ecu) v Guabira (Bol) 2-1, 2-3 (agg 4-4, LDU Quito on away goals); Nacional Asuncion (Par) v Mineros de Guayana (Ven) 0-0, 0-0 (agg 0-0, Nacional Asuncion 4-3 on pens); Rosario Central (Arg) v Sao Paulo (Bra) 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1); San Lorenzo (Arg) v Atletico Mineiro (Bra) 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0); Sol de America (Par) v Independiente Medellin (Col) 2-0, 1-3 (agg 3-3, Sol de America on away goals); Sport Rosario (Per) v Cerro (Uru) 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2); Sportivo Luqueno (Par) v Deportivo Cuenca (Ecu) 2-0, 0-2 (agg 2-2, Dep Cuenca 6-5 on pens); Union Espanola (Chl) v Sport Huancayo (Per) 0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3); UT Cajamarca (Per) v Rampla Juniors (Uru) 2-0, 0-4 (agg 2-4); Zamora (Ven) v Colon (Arg) 0-2, 0-1 (agg 0-3)

ARGENTINA

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca Jnrs (C)	27	18	4	5	50	22	58
Godoy Cruz	27	17	5	5	45	24	56
San Lorenzo	27	14	8	5	31	20	50
Huracan	27	13	9	5	35	24	48
Talleres	27	13	7	7	33	20	46
Independiente	27	13	7	7	29	19	46
Racing	27	13	6	8	46	32	45
River Plate	27	13	6	8	39	26	45
Def y Justicia	27	13	5	9	41	34	44
Union	27	11	10	6	33	23	43
Colon	27	11	8	8	32	22	41
Argentinos J	27	12	5	10	36	30	41
Belgrano	27	10	10	7	29	28	40
Velez Sarsfield	27	10	8	9	31	32	38
Atl Tucuman	27	8	12	7	29	26	36
Estudiantes	27	10	6	11	25	26	36
Banfield	27	9	8	10	27	24	35
San Martin	27	9	6	12	30	36	33
Patronato	27	8	9	10	26	32	33
Rosario	27	8	8	11	30	41	32
Lanus	27	6	11	10	20	37	29
Newell's[1]	27	8	6	13	23	28	27
Gimnasia LP	27	7	6	14	28	43	27
Tigre	27	4	12	11	26	33	24
Temperley (R)[2]	27	5	8	14	22	46	23
Chacarita (R)[2]	27	4	6	17	23	40	18
Arsenal (R)[2]	27	3	8	16	19	36	17
Olimpo (R)[2]	27	3	6	18	16	50	15

[1]3pts deducted for failing to pay players
[2]Relegation decided by points-per-game average over the 4 most recent seasons

PERU

2018 1st Stage (Torneo de Verano) Final
1st leg - May 6; 2nd leg - May12
Sport Huancayo v Sporting Cristal 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
Sporting Cristal qualify for the overall 2018 championship play-offs

URUGUAY

2018 – APERTURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional[1]	15	12	2	1	26	8	38
Penarol	15	11	3	1	28	10	36
Danubio	15	9	3	3	23	13	30
Defensor	15	9	3	3	26	20	30
Liverpool	15	8	3	4	17	16	27
River Plate	15	7	4	4	28	22	25
Cerro	15	7	4	4	16	18	25
Progreso	15	6	3	6	25	17	21
Fenix	15	6	2	7	18	18	20
Boston River	15	5	4	6	17	21	19
Wanderers	15	5	3	7	14	20	18
Atenas	15	5	1	9	11	27	16
Racing	15	3	3	9	14	24	12
Torque	15	2	4	9	13	27	10
Rampla Jnrs	15	2	4	9	12	27	10
Tanque Sisley[2]	15	0	0	15	0	0	0

[1]*As apertura winners, Nacional have qualified for the overall 2018 championship play-offs*
[2]*Excluded for failing to pay debts; all games awarded as wins to their scheduled opponents but with a 0-0 scoreline*

ASIA

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group stage: final tables

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahli (Q)	6	4	2	0	9	4	14
Al Jazira (Q)	6	2	2	2	9	9	8
Al Gharafa	6	2	2	2	12	9	8
Tractor Sazi	6	0	2	4	2	10	2

Al Ahli (Sau), Al Gharafa (Qat), AlJazira (UAE), Tractor Sazi (Irn)

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Duhail (Q)	6	6	0	0	13	6	18
Zob Ahan (Q)	6	2	1	3	6	8	7
Lokomotiv	6	2	1	3	13	9	7
Al Wahda	6	1	0	5	6	15	3

Al Duhail (Qat), Al Wahda (UAE), Lokomotiv (Uzb), Zob Ahan (Irn)

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Persepolis (Q)	6	4	1	1	8	3	13
Al Sadd (Q)	6	4	0	2	11	5	12
Nasaf	6	3	1	2	4	8	10
Al Wasl	6	0	0	6	3	10	0

Al Sadd (Qat), Al Wasl (UAE), Nasaf (Uzb), Persepolis (Irn)

GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esteghlal T (Q)	6	3	3	0	9	5	12
Al Ain (Q)	6	2	4	0	10	6	10
Al Rayyan	6	1	3	2	7	11	6
Al Hilal	6	0	2	4	3	7	2

Al Ain (UAE), Al Hilal (Sau), Al Rayyan (Qat), Esteghlal Tehran (Irn)

GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jeonbuk (Q)	6	5	0	1	22	9	15
Tianjin (Q)	6	4	1	1	15	11	13
Kashiwa	6	1	1	4	6	10	4
Kitchee	6	1	0	5	1	14	3

Jeonbuk Motors (SKo), Kashiwa Reysol (Jap), Kitchee (HK), Tianjin Quanjian (Chn)

GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
S'hai SIPG (Q)	6	3	2	1	10	6	11
Ulsan (Q)	6	2	3	1	15	11	9
Melbourne V	6	2	2	2	11	16	8
Kawasaki	6	0	3	3	6	9	3

Kawasaki Frontale (Jap), Melbourne Victory (Aus), Shanghai SIPG (Chn), Ulsan Hyundai (SKo)

GROUP G	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gua'zhou E (Q)	6	3	3	0	12	6	12
Buriram U (Q)	6	2	3	1	7	6	9
Cerezo	6	2	2	2	6	8	8
Jeju United	6	1	0	5	6	11	3

Buriram United (Tha), Cerezo Osaka (Jap), Guangzhou Evergrande (Chn), Jeju United (SKo)

GROUP H	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Suwon (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
Kashima (Q)	6	2	3	1	8	6	9
Sydney	6	1	3	2	7	8	6
S'hai S'hua	6	0	5	1	6	8	5

Kashima Antlers (Jap), Shanghai Shenhua (Chn), Suwon Bluewings (SKo), Sydney (Aus)

● *The top 2 in each group qualified for the1st knockout round (last16)*

1st knockout round (last 16)

1st legs - May 7-9; 2nd legs - May14-16
Al Ain v Al Duhail 2-4, 1-4 (agg 3-8); Al Jazira v Persepolis 3-2, 1-2 (agg 4-4, Persepolis on away goals); Al Sadd v Al Ahli 2-1, 2-2 (agg 4-3); Buriram United v Jeonbuk Motors 3-2, 0-2 (agg 3-4); Kashima Antlers v Shanghai SIPG 3-1, 1-2 (agg 4-3); Tianjin Quanjian v Guangzhou Evergrande 0-0, 2-2 (agg 2-2, Tianjin Quanjian on away goals); Ulsan Hyundai v Suwon Bluewings 1-0, 0-3 (agg 1-3); Zob Ahan v Esteghlal Tehran 1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)

AUSTRALIA

2017-18 – REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sydney (Q)	27	20	4	3	64	22	64
Newcastle (Q)	27	15	5	7	57	37	50
Melb'rne C (Q)	27	13	4	10	41	33	43
Melb'rne V (Q)	27	12	5	10	43	37	41
Adelaide (Q)	27	11	6	10	36	38	39
Brisbane (Q)	27	10	5	12	33	40	35
Wstn Sydney	27	8	9	10	38	47	33
Perth	27	10	2	15	37	50	32
Wellington P	27	5	6	16	31	55	21
Central Coast	27	4	8	15	28	49	20

The top 6 qualified for the championship play-offs (the top 2 went directly into the semi-finals)

Elimination finals
Apr 20: Melbourne City 2 Brisbane Roar 0.
Apr 22: Melbourne Victory 2 Adelaide United 1.

Semi-finals
Apr 27: Newcastle Jets 2 Melbourne City 1.
Apr 28: Sydney 2 Melbourne Victory 3 (aet).

2017-18 Championship Final
May 5: Newcastle Jets 0 Melbourne Victory 1.

BAHRAIN

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Muharraq (C)	18	14	3	1	31	7	45
Al Najma	18	8	6	4	34	26	30
Manama	18	8	5	5	33	20	29
Malkiya	18	8	4	6	36	30	28
Al Shabab	18	5	9	4	19	20	24
Al Hidd	18	5	6	7	22	30	21
Al Riffa	18	5	4	9	22	31	19
East Riffa[1]	18	3	8	7	24	32	17
Al Ittihad (R)	18	3	5	10	22	34	14
Al Ahli[2] (R)	18	4	4	10	21	34	13

[1]*Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*
[2]*3pts deducted*

GUAM

2017-18 Championship Final
May 27: LOA Heat 3 NAPA Rovers 4.

HONG KONG

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kitchee (C)	18	16	2	0	67	12	50
Tai Po	18	11	4	3	36	21	37
Pegasus	18	10	4	4	37	26	34
Eastern	18	9	1	8	34	25	28
Southern	18	8	2	8	28	27	26
Yuen Long	18	6	5	7	21	30	23
R&F	18	7	1	10	27	35	22
Lee Man	18	4	3	11	22	36	15
Dreams	18	4	3	11	18	40	15
Rangers (R)	18	1	3	14	12	50	6

IRAN

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Persepolis (C)	30	19	7	4	48	15	64
Zob Ahan	30	15	10	5	46	30	55
Esteghlal T	30	15	9	6	43	18	54
Saipa	30	15	9	6	40	34	54
Pars Jonoubi	30	11	14	5	34	24	47
Paykan	30	12	9	9	32	26	45
Foolad	30	10	14	6	28	27	44
Sanat Naft	30	10	10	10	36	36	40
Gostaresh	30	9	10	11	24	32	37
Tractor Sazi	30	8	10	12	28	33	34
Padideh1	30	10	9	11	33	33	33
Esteghlal K	30	7	10	13	25	42	31
Sepidrood	30	8	6	16	24	39	30
Sepahan	30	6	11	13	31	34	29
Naft Tehran (R)	30	5	9	16	23	41	24
Siah Jam'an (R)	30	2	9	19	17	48	15

JORDAN

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Wehdat (C)	22	16	5	1	45	13	53
Al Faisaly	22	12	5	5	33	18	41
Al Jazeera	22	12	5	5	37	23	41
Al Ramtha	22	11	6	5	30	16	39
Shabab Ordon	22	10	7	5	30	22	37
That Ras	22	5	8	9	19	22	23
Al Ahli	22	5	8	9	22	31	23
Al Buqa'a	22	5	8	9	21	33	23
Shabab Aqaba	22	5	7	10	28	35	22
Al Hussein	22	5	7	10	20	31	22
Mansheyat (R)	22	6	3	13	26	40	21
Al Yarmouk (R)	22	4	3	15	16	43	15

KUWAIT

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kuwait SC (C)	21	15	4	2	51	18	49
Al Salmiya	21	10	3	8	31	32	33
Al Qadsia	21	9	6	6	37	25	33
Kazma	21	6	11	4	29	28	29
Al Arabi	21	7	6	8	30	29	27
Al Naser	21	8	2	11	30	39	26
Al Jahra[1]	21	8	2	11	38	40	26
Al Tad'mon (R)	21	2	4	15	33	68	10

[1]*Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*

LEBANON

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahed (C)	22	16	6	0	50	9	54
Al Nejmeh	22	15	2	5	40	22	47
Safa	22	10	6	6	31	25	36
Al Ansar	22	9	6	7	33	24	33
Akhaa Ahli	22	7	12	3	23	19	33
Salam Zgharta	22	9	5	8	30	31	32
Tadamon Sour	22	8	5	9	28	27	29
Tripoli SC	22	6	7	9	28	33	25
Racing	22	7	4	11	21	29	25
Al Nabi Sheet	22	5	5	12	21	35	20
Sh'ab Arabi (R)	22	4	5	13	16	31	17
Al Islah (R)	22	2	5	15	14	50	11

PALESTINE (West Bank)

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hilal Quds (C)	22	14	6	2	45	11	48
Ahli Al Khalil	22	11	10	1	48	19	43
Alsamu	22	10	6	6	39	32	36
Jabal Mukabar	22	11	3	8	34	31	36
Sh'b Al Khalil	22	9	7	6	23	21	34
Al Bireh	22	9	6	7	27	26	33
Markaz Balata	22	8	6	8	35	28	30
Taraji Wadi	22	8	5	9	34	34	29
Thaqafi	22	5	12	5	26	25	27
Al Dahiriya	22	7	5	10	31	35	26
Al Khader (R)	22	2	3	17	18	50	9
Dora (R)	22	2	3	17	18	66	9

QATAR

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Duhail (C)	22	19	3	0	86	27	60
Al Sadd	22	16	1	5	68	25	49
Al Rayyan	22	13	4	5	54	39	43
Al Gharafa	22	10	5	7	43	34	35
Umm Salal	22	8	9	5	33	34	33
Al Sailiya	22	8	4	10	40	42	28
Al Arabi	22	6	6	10	30	42	24
Al Khor	22	7	3	12	24	39	24
Al Ahli	22	6	4	12	25	43	22
Qatar SC	22	6	4	12	24	46	22
Al Kharaitiyat[1]	22	4	4	14	29	62	16
Al Markhiya (R)	22	2	7	13	19	42	13

[1]*Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*

SAUDI ARABIA

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal (C)	26	16	8	2	47	23	56
Al Ahli	26	16	7	3	59	26	55
Al Nassr	26	12	8	6	47	34	44
Al Ettifaq	26	10	6	10	37	46	36
Al Fateh	26	9	9	8	34	39	36
Al Faisaly	26	9	8	9	39	33	35
Al Taawoun	26	9	7	10	43	36	34
Al Fayha	26	8	10	8	36	40	34
Al Ittihad	26	8	9	9	34	41	33
Al Shabab	26	8	7	11	36	36	31
Al Batin	26	8	7	11	35	46	31
Al Qadisiyah	26	6	7	13	28	41	25
Al Raed[1]	26	5	9	12	43	53	24
Ohod[1]	26	4	6	16	24	48	18

[1]*Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ain (C)	22	16	5	1	65	23	53
Al Wahda	22	14	4	4	50	29	46
Al Wasl	22	12	5	5	42	27	41
Al Nasr	22	11	4	7	30	24	37
Sha'b Al Ahli	22	7	10	5	25	18	31
Al Sharjah	22	8	5	9	26	30	29
Al Jazira	22	7	7	8	34	36	28
Ajman	22	7	5	10	25	36	26
Dibba	22	5	6	11	21	36	21
Al Dhafra	22	4	6	12	24	42	18
Emirates[1]	22	4	5	13	22	41	17
Hatta (R)[2]	22	4	4	14	30	52	16

[1]*Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off*
[2]*Relegated after losing rel/prom play-off*

OCEANIA

OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals

(single-leg ties)
Apr 7: Nalkutan (Van) 1 Marist (Sol) 2; Team Wellington (NZ) 11 Toti City (PNG) 0.
Apr 8: Auckland City (NZ) 2 Solomon Warriors (Sol) 0; Dragon (Tah) 1 Lautoka (Fij) 2.

Semi-finals

1st legs - Apr 22; 2nd legs - Apr 29
Lautoka v Marist 1-1, 1-0 (agg 2-1); Team Wellington v Auckland City 0-0, 2-2 (agg 2-2, Team Wellington on away goals)

Final

1st leg
May13
Team Wellington 6 (Allen 16, Sinclair 57, 71, Bevin 61, Barcia 63, Schrijvers 84)
Lautoka 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 1,200. **Ref:** Zitouni (Tah)
Team Wellington: Basalaj - Gulley, Hilliar, Schrijvers, Kayara (Watson 69), Ilich, Barcia, Molloy, Hailemariam (Sinclair 53), Allen (Kilkolly 86), Bevin.
Lautoka: Mateinaqara - Vesikula (Bainivalu 88), Kaltack, Sivoki, Justin (Manumanubai 80), Chettleburgh, Radrigai, Naidu, Rawaqa, Totori, Vakatalesau (Ali 69). *Sent off: Naidu 64.*

2nd leg
May 20
Lautoka 3 (Totori 52, 84, Ali 82)
Team Wellington 4 (Radrigai og 10, Ilich 32, Allen 51, Kilkolly 88)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Hauata (Tah)
Team Wellington10-3 on agg
Lautoka: Bokini - Justin (Vesikula 81), Kaltack, Sivoki, Radrigai, Ali, Sahib, Chettleburgh (Manumanubai 89), Rawaqa, Totori, Vakatalesau (Bainivalu 46).
Team Wellington: Basalaj - Gulley, Schrijvers, Kayara (Watson 80), Sinclair (Allen 46), Barcia, Ilich, Molloy (Wood 64), Hailemariam, Kilkolly, Bevin.

NEW ZEALAND

2017-18 Championship Final
Apr 1: Auckland City 1 Team Wellington 0.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

2018 Championship Final
May 26: Toti City 3 Besta PNG United 0.

TAHITI

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts[1]
Central Sp (C)	27	22	3	2	107	40	96
Tefana	27	20	4	3	100	45	91
Dragon	27	19	5	3	112	41	89
Pirae	27	14	4	9	104	64	73
Venus	27	13	4	10	101	52	70
Taiarapu	27	12	5	10	99	67	68
Manu Ura	27	11	1	15	70	74	61
Tahiti U-19	27	3	3	21	51	125	39
Aorai[2]	27	4	1	22	33	135	38
Tamarii P'ruu[3]	27	1	2	24	26	160	29

[1]*4pts for a win, 2pts for a draw,1pt for a defeat*
[2]*2pts deducted*
[3]*3pts deducted*

CONCACAF

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Semi-finals

1st legs - Apr 3/4; 2nd legs - Apr10
Guadalajara (Mex) v New York Red Bulls (USA) 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0); Toronto (Can) v America (Mex) 3-1, 1-1 (agg 4-2)

Final

1st leg
Apr17
Toronto 1 (Osorio 19)
Guadalajara 2 (Pizarro 2, Pulido 72)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 29,925. **Ref:** Montero (CR)
Toronto: Bono - Van der Wiel, Moor, Mavinga (Zavaleta 46), Auro, Delgado (Aketxe 81), Bradley, Osorio, Morgan (Morrow 67), Altidore, Giovinco.
Guadalajara: Jimenez - Brizuela, Salcido, Alanis, Mayorga (Lopez 71), Pineda, Perez, Cisneros, Pulido (Macias 90+4), Pizarro, Godinez (Zaldivar 77).

2nd leg
Apr 25
Guadalajara 1 (Pineda 19)
Toronto 2 (Altidore 25, Giovinco 44)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 36,977. **Ref:** Moncada (Hnd)
Agg 3-3; Guadalajara 4-2 on pens
Guadalajara: Cota - Brizuela (Lopez 68), Pereira, Alanis, Hernandez, Salcido (Godinez 55), Perez (Zaldivar 68), Cisneros, Pineda, Pizarro, Pulido.
Toronto: Bono - Auro, Van der Wiel, Bradley, Morgan, Hasler (Hamilton 57), Delgado, Osorio, Vazquez (Chapman 71), Altidore (Aketxe 84), Giovinco.

BELIZE

2017-18 Closing Final

1st leg - May19; 2nd leg - May 21
Belize Defence Force v Belmopan Bandits 1-3, 3-5 (agg 4-8)

COSTA RICA

2017-18 Clausura Final

1st leg - May15; 2nd leg - May 20
Herediano v Saprissa 1-1, 0-0 (agg 1-1, Saprissa 4-3 on pens)

EL SALVADOR

2017-18 Clausura Final

May 20: Alianza 1 Santa Tecla 0.

GUATEMALA

2017-18 Clausura Final

1st leg - May 23; 2nd leg - May 27
Xelaju v Guastatoya 1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)

HONDURAS

2017-18 Clausura Final

1st leg - May13; 2nd leg - May19
Motagua v Marathon 1-1, 0-0 (aet) (agg 1-1, Marathon 5-4 on pens)

JAMAICA

2017-18 Championship Final

Apr 23: Portmore United 0 Waterhouse 0 (aet, Portmore United 4-3 on pens).

MEXICO

2017-18 – CLAUSURA: REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Toluca (Q)	17	11	3	3	24	13	36
America (Q)	17	7	8	2	24	14	29
Monterrey (Q)	17	8	5	4	30	21	29
Santos (Q)	17	9	2	6	29	20	29
Tigres (Q)	17	7	7	3	23	16	28
Tijuana (Q)	17	6	7	4	18	12	25
Pumas (Q)	17	6	6	5	24	24	24
Morelia (Q)	17	7	3	7	22	24	24
Pachuca	17	6	5	6	29	27	23
Puebla	17	7	2	8	23	24	23
Necaxa	17	4	10	3	21	15	22
Cruz Azul	17	5	7	5	22	18	22
Leon	17	6	4	7	24	33	22
Queretaro	17	4	6	7	13	18	18
Atlas	17	5	3	9	17	26	18
Veracruz	17	5	3	9	12	25	18
Guadalajara	17	3	6	8	14	24	15
Lobos (R)[1]	17	2	3	12	18	33	9

The top 8 qualified for the quarter-finals
[1]Relegation decided by points-per-game average over the 3 most recent seasons

Quarter-finals

1st legs - May 2/3; 2nd legs - May 5/6
Morelia v Toluca 2-2, 2-2 (agg 4-4, Toluca on better regular-season record)
Pumas v America 1-4, 1-2 (agg 2-6)
Tigres v Santos Laguna 2-0, 0-2 (agg 2-2, Santos on better regular-season record)
Tijuana v Monterrey 1-1, 2-1 (agg 3-2)

Semi-finals

1st legs - May10; 2nd legs - May13
Santos Laguna v America 4-1, 2-2 (agg 6-3)
Tijuana v Toluca 2-1, 1-4 (agg 3-5)

Final

1st leg - May17; 2nd leg - May 20
Santos Laguna v Toluca 2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2)

PANAMA

2017-18 Clausura Final

May 19: Independiente 1 Tauro 0.

AFRICA

CONFEDERATION CUP

Play-off round

(the 16 losing teams from the CAF Champions League 1st round - marked with an asterisk - entered at this stage)
1st legs - Apr 6-8; 2nd legs - Apr17/18
Aduana Stars* (Gha) v Fosa Juniors (Mad) 6-1, 1-2 (agg 7-3); Al Hilal Omdurman* (Sud) v Akwa United (Nga) 2-0, 1-3 (agg 3-3, Al Hilal Omdurman on away goals); AS Vita* (DRC) v La Mancha (Con) 1-0, 5-1 (agg 6-1); ASEC Abidjan* (IvC) v CR Belouizdad (Alg) 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0); Bidvest Wits* (SAf) v Enyimba (Nga) 1-1, 0-0 (agg 1-1, Enyimba on away goals); Generation Foot* (Sen) v RS Berkane (Mor) 3-1, 0-2 (agg 3-3, RS Berkane on away goals); Gor Mahia* (Ken) v SuperSport United (SAf) 1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2, Gor Mahia on away goals); MFM* (Nga) v Djoliba (Mli) 0-1, 0-0 (agg 0-1); Mounana* (Gab) v Al Masry (Egy) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3); Plateau United* (Nga) v USM Alger (Alg) 2-1, 0-4 (agg 2-5); Rayon Sports* (Rwa) v Costa do Sol (Moz) 3-0, 0-2 (agg 3-2); Saint George* (Eth) v CARA (Con) 1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, CARA 4-3 on pens); Uniao Songo* (Moz) v Al Hilal Obayed (Sud) 3-1, 1-2 (agg 4-3); WAC* (IvC) v Deportivo Niefang (EqG) 2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2); Young Africans* (Tan) v Welayta Dicha (Eth) 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1); Zanaco* (Zam) v Raja Casablanca (Mor) 0-2, 0-3 (agg 0-5)

EGYPT

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahly (C)	34	28	4	2	75	19	88
Ismaily	34	19	11	4	50	27	68
Al Masry	34	18	9	7	52	34	63
Zamalek	34	18	7	9	45	30	61
Smouha	34	14	9	11	37	26	51
ENPPI	34	12	14	8	39	38	50
Entag Harby	34	12	11	11	36	36	47
Misr El Makasa	34	12	10	12	48	44	46
Al Assiouty	34	10	12	12	43	41	42
Al Mokawloon	34	10	12	12	42	49	42
Al Ittihad	34	9	14	11	41	43	41
Petrojet	34	9	11	14	32	40	38
Al Gaish	34	9	11	14	26	42	38
El Dakiyeh	34	8	13	13	37	46	37
Wadi Degla	34	8	10	16	31	46	34
El Raja (R)	34	5	12	17	24	53	27
Tanta (R)	34	4	14	16	27	44	26
Al Nasr (R)	34	4	10	20	33	60	22

MOROCCO

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ittihad T (C)	30	14	10	6	34	23	52
Wydad C	30	14	9	7	44	26	51
Hassania	30	13	12	5	40	22	51
FUS	30	13	10	7	34	26	49
Difaa	30	13	9	8	49	33	48
Raja C	30	13	9	8	45	33	48
Olympic Safi	30	10	13	7	32	28	43
FAR	30	11	10	9	35	34	43
RSB	30	11	8	11	37	34	41
Rapide	30	10	7	13	27	31	37
Moghreb	30	10	6	14	24	35	36
Olympique K	30	9	8	13	37	47	35
Chabab RH	30	7	12	11	27	31	33
Kawkab	30	8	8	14	29	48	32
Chabab AK (R)	30	6	11	13	30	41	29
Racing (R)	30	3	8	19	23	55	17

SOUTH AFRICA

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mamelodi S (C)	30	18	6	6	49	24	60
Orlando P'tes	30	15	10	5	41	26	55
Kaizer Chiefs	30	12	12	6	27	22	48
Maritzburg	30	11	11	8	36	23	44
Cape Town C	30	11	7	12	26	27	40
Free State S	30	10	10	10	29	31	40
SuperSport	30	9	12	9	28	28	39
Gold Arrows	30	8	14	8	36	34	38
AmaZulu	30	9	11	10	30	35	38
Chippa Utd	30	7	16	7	27	26	37
Bloemfontein	30	8	13	9	25	32	37
Polokwane	30	7	15	8	33	33	36
Bidvest Wits	30	9	9	12	27	36	36
Baroka	30	7	13	10	32	38	34
Platinum S (R)[1]	30	6	9	15	23	35	27
Ajax Cape T (R)	30	6	6	18	21	40	24

[1]Relegated after losing in the rel/prom play-offs

SWAZILAND

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
M Swallows (C)	26	17	9	0	47	14	60
Yng Buffaloes	26	17	7	2	45	13	58
Green Mamba	26	15	5	6	45	24	50
Manzini Wndrs	26	12	6	8	34	30	42
Mb Highl'drs	26	11	7	8	37	27	40
Malanti Chiefs	26	11	5	10	35	42	38
R Leopards	26	9	10	7	33	21	37
Manzini Sund's	26	8	11	7	31	24	35
Matsapha Utd	26	8	11	7	26	26	35
Mo'ni Pirates	26	6	11	9	24	33	29
Tambuti	26	7	6	13	26	36	27
Vovovo	26	7	3	16	24	45	24
Red Lions (R)	26	3	5	18	20	47	14
Mb City (R)	26	2	2	22	15	60	8

TUNISIA

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esperance T (C)	26	17	7	2	46	19	58
Club Africain	26	14	5	7	36	21	47
Etoile Sahel	26	14	5	7	38	17	47
CS Sfaxien	26	13	7	6	37	18	46
CA Bizertin[1]	26	14	1	11	40	32	37
US Monastir	26	9	9	8	25	22	36
ES Metlaoui	26	9	7	10	30	35	34
JS Kairouan	26	9	5	12	20	32	32
Std Tunisien	26	8	7	11	29	36	31
AS Gabes	26	7	8	11	25	32	29
Std Gabesien	26	6	10	10	15	21	28
Ben Guerdane[2]	26	7	5	14	22	34	26
Esperance Z (R)	26	5	11	10	13	26	26
CO Med'ine (R)	26	4	5	17	12	43	17

[1]6pts deducted for failing to pay a former player
[2]Stay in top division after being awarded victory in the abandoned rel/prom play-off

UGANDA

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Vipers (C)	30	19	8	3	50	20	65
KCCA	30	17	10	3	54	21	61
SC Villa[1]	30	16	9	5	28	12	55
Onduparaka	30	13	9	8	28	17	48
Kirinya-Jinja[2]	30	12	8	10	30	27	43
BUL	30	11	6	13	26	29	39
Police	30	11	6	13	31	39	39
Bright Stars	30	8	14	8	24	26	38
URA	30	9	10	11	26	28	37
Maroons	30	6	19	5	18	20	37
Mbarara City	30	6	14	10	17	25	32
Soana	30	8	8	14	19	35	32
Express	30	8	7	15	25	31	31
UPDF (R)	30	7	8	15	22	41	29
Proline (R)	30	7	7	16	27	34	28
Masavu (R)	30	5	11	14	18	41	26

[1]2pts deducted and 2 goals scored deducted for fan violence
[2]1pt deducted and 1 goal scored deducted for abuse towards a referee from club officials

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions
(R) = relegated
(Q) = qualified for next stage
(SC) = enter Sudamericana Cup

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Committed...Schalke's Guido Burgstaller is sandwiched between Sokratis Papastathopoulos (left) and Nuri Sahin of Dortmund during his side's 2-0 win in April

BOR DORTMUND v SCHALKE

Big beasts of the Ruhr contest the Bundesliga's fiercest derby

While the Bayern-Dortmund *Klassiker* may bring together two of the Bundesliga's most successful sides, it has nothing in the way of passion, intensity and historic rivalry to match the *Revierderby*.

Situated just 17 miles apart in the German industrial heartland of the Ruhr valley, Schalke from Gelsenkirchen and Borussia from Dortmund both have huge, loyal fan bases who pride themselves on their club's working-class roots.

Although Schalke have never won the Bundesliga – something Dortmund fans never tire of pointing out – they have been German champions seven times, dominating the domestic game in the 1930s and early 1940s. And they also finished above their arch-rivals last season, as league runners-up.

Dortmund won the last of their eight league titles in 2012 and also hold the upper hand when it comes to continental competition. Schalke won the UEFA Cup in 1997 but were still overshadowed by the neighbours who won the Champions League that same season. Dortmund had also previously lifted the Cup-winners Cup in 1966.

One of the most notorious derby incidents occurred in 1969 when visiting Schalke supporters invaded the pitch to celebrate a goal. But when stewards used dogs to clear the playing surface, several Schalke players, including their captain Friedel Rausch, were bitten.

Events that day led to a rapid deterioration in relations between the two clubs.

To add fuel to the fire, when Dortmund played at Schalke the following season the hosts' president retaliated by hiring four lions to welcome their guests onto the field! WS

Who let the dogs out...the game at Dortmund in 1969

ON BOTH SIDES

UDO LATTEK
- 1979-81 & 2000 (both as coach)
- 1992-93 (coach)

JENS LEHMANN
- 1988-98
- 1999-2003

ANDREAS MOLLER
- 1988-90 & 1994-2000
- 2000-03

STEFFEN FREUND
- 1991-93
- 1993-98

FELIPE SANTANA
- 2008-13
- 2013-15

CLASSIC ENCOUNTERS

1925 May 3
Schalke win 4-2 in the first-ever meeting between the pair and, after 152 games, they still have the edge over Dortmund in the derby, with 59 victories and 51 defeats.

2007 May 12
In the penultimate game of the season, Schalke – who had led the Bundesliga for the previous three months – lose 2-0 at Dortmund and hand the league title to Stuttgart.

2008 Sep 13
Trailing 3-0 at home with 21 minutes remaining, Dortmund stage a remarkable recovery to grab a 3-3 draw.

Agony...Schalke's Lincoln sees the title slip away in 2007

2017 Nov 25
Having opened up a 4-0 lead in their home game last season, Dortmund somehow manage to cave in and concede four goals in the final half hour, including a 94th-minute equaliser from Naldo.

NEXT MONTH ISSUE ON SALE JULY 20

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